

# **Achieving Structural Change**

## ***A Guide for Community Workers In Building Cohesive Communities***

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# *Introduction*

*Why This Guide?* Queensland society, like many others across the world, is experiencing immense social change. These changes are at many levels including political, social, cultural and economic change and society is increasingly more diverse and complex. We are more enmeshed in global networks through trade, migration, diplomacy and travel. Societal institutions are challenged by these quick changes, and the challenge is for societies to adapt quickly and effectively to them.

While these social processes have created opportunities for some, it has caused disadvantage for others. The four key areas where disadvantage is experienced are:

- Lack of power over resources.
- Lack of power over decision-making.
- Lack of power over relationships.
- Lack of lack of power over information.

There are many factors that cause disadvantage. One that is often overlooked is social exclusion, which may be a result of barriers of culture, ethnicity, race, language and religion.

Queensland is a diverse state with, at the time of the 2006 Census, 17.9 % of Queenslanders being born overseas. (ABS 2006). Furthermore, one in three people had at least one parent born overseas. The key languages spoken at home were Mandarin, Italian, Cantonese, Vietnamese and German.

While not all ethnic communities face the same levels of disadvantage or difficulties in settlement, there is a strong evidence base to indicate that some people from culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly refugees, face great disadvantage. Some of the areas in which culturally diverse communities have faced disadvantage include finding jobs (in the labour market), in housing, in communication, education and training, and in accessing services and experiences of racism (DIMIA 2003, Beer and Foley 2003, Jupp et al. 1991, Babacan and Gopalkrishnan 2005).

Overcoming disadvantage requires a sound understanding of conceptual and practical issues. It involves developing strategies that work. Workers and community leaders are often faced with very complex social problems, sometimes without much support or resources. They engage with their communities in different ways to bring about social change.

This guide is intended as a short road map about key concepts in addressing social disadvantage, and practice strategies that may be used to organize communities, advocate on social issues and to bring about institutional change (policy, program change and service delivery).

**Section 1** of the guide (chapters 1- 11) covers the key conceptual issues, frameworks and ethical issues of human service work.

**Section 2** of the guide (chapters 12-18) focuses on methods of achieving structural change.

**Section 3** of the guide (chapters 19-29) focuses on practice issues.

We hope you will find the book helpful in your work.

# **SECTION 1:**

## **CONCEPTS, FRAMEWORKS AND ETHICS OF HUMAN SERVICE WORK**

# *1. What is Structural Change?*

In our society, we witness everyday how disadvantage impacts on the lives of individuals, families, groups and communities. *Poverty, poor health, unemployment, discrimination, crime, substance abuse, inappropriate housing and psychological distress are just some examples.* As human service workers, we work in partnership with people to try and overcome the disadvantage they experience.

The disadvantage that people experience is often very complex in nature. It is sometimes as a result of personal circumstances. Frequently it is a result of a combination of factors - both personal and societal.

The focus of this manual will be to look at **societal factors** which impact on people's experiences of disadvantage. Disadvantage resulting from societal factors is often referred to as **structural disadvantage**. Some examples of societal factors include inability to access services, institutional barriers such as policies, legislation, processes; and discrimination on the basis of factors such as ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability and sexuality. An important element of identifying structural disadvantage is to make the link between personal and the political, the individual and structural or private troubles being public issues.

This idea stems from the understanding that an individual's problem is not just their own problem. For example, if a person cannot access childcare then it may be viewed as the family's problem. However, it has an impact on society. If the child does not have appropriate care then the future generations of that society are being neglected and this will have a detrimental affect on the nation. One parent will stay at home to look after the child and therefore will have to withdraw from the workforce, maybe at a time when the economy needs skills and labour. There may be issues relating to the health of the child if appropriate care is not provided and this will have impacts on the health system. The example can be extended to show that any problem that appears to be private is in fact also public and concerns society. Thus the lack of childcare is a structural issue leading to disadvantage.

Australia is a multicultural country with a rich diversity of people from many countries throughout the world. All Australians have a culture. Culture is what gives us meaning and understanding in our lives. Some people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have been here all of their lives while others have come recently as newly arrived migrants and refugees. Unfortunately some

people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds sometimes experience disadvantage as a result of their culture, religion and ethnicity. Power relations in social structures, institutions, and systems such as the legal or labour market shape the way in which minorities participate. **Social exclusion** takes place based on socially constructed understandings of factors such as race, culture and ethnicity. How an immigrant is defined, what views of culture are adopted, what is the approach to rights will determine how people are included or not included in civil society and how they participate in all elements of life.

An emphasis of this manual will be on developing understanding and methods for responding to the structural disadvantage that people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds experience in the Australian context.

## *2. Understanding Key Terms*

As a first step it is important to work from a common language and attribute the same meanings to the words we use. Below are some very brief definitions of frequently used words in the social and community services sector.

- **Community:** A broad term used to refer to a group of people who share a common identity, such as geographical location, class or ethnic background or special interest
- **Culture** – it is a complex term used in numerous ways. It is a constructed, dynamic and interactive process by which society determines its rules, structures, symbols, traditions, values, beliefs, practices, customs and institutions, which moulds all aspects of life.
- **Ethnicity-** refers to a consciousness of shared or common origin, common beliefs and values. Definitions of ethnicity are marked by reference to ancestry, territory or land, language, religion, kinship groups and cultural practices.
- **Ethnic Minority-** often used to denote a small number of people in a large population. However, minority status is more than an issue of numbers. Minority group members are often disadvantaged as a result of discrimination by others; the experience of discrimination and exclusion results in a sense of group identification, solidarity –of belonging together and there is some degree of social or physical isolation from the mainstream of society.
- **Multiculturalism:** is a term that describes the diversity of a society. As a policy it promotes the benefits of diversity through raising awareness of culture, ethnicity and religion, and implements measures for social cohesion through respect for and acceptance of difference.
- **Racism:** a belief in the superiority of one particular racial or ethnic group based on biological, cultural and other factors. Racism results in behaviour that excludes individuals and groups from some or many aspects of society



- **Refugee:** Refugees are involuntary migrants who move due to persecution in their home country and who are in need of resettlement. The United Nations Convention on Refugees defines refugees as people who:  
*are outside their country of nationality or their usual country of residence, and are unable or unwilling to return or to seek the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, and among other things, are not war criminals or people who have committed serious non-political crimes.*
- **Social change** – refers to alterations in social behaviour patterns at a societal level brought about changes to social institutions, changes in socialisation trends and changes in attitudes towards particular issues.
- **Social institutions** refer to the key organisations of society. These include organisations in areas such as education, health, employment, recreation and housing. Social institutions can be government, non-government, community and private sector organisations.
- **Structural change-** refers to the change that occurs in the systems of societal institutions, (i.e. in policies, processes and procedures) to overcome social disadvantage.
- **Structural disadvantage-** refers to the disadvantage experienced by some individuals or families or groups or communities as a result of the way society functions (how resources are distributed, how people relate to each other, who has power, how institutions are organised).

### *3. Perspectives on Why People Experience Disadvantage*

Many newly arrived migrants and refugees experience disadvantage when interacting with organisations and when trying to understand the new ways of doing things in Australia. While ethnicity in itself does not cause disadvantage and there is considerable variability across and within ethnic groups, studies indicate that many culturally diverse groups experience relative socioeconomic disadvantage. For example, the North Sydney Area Health (2004), on key socioeconomic indicators such as education, employment and income levels, reported that people from non-English speaking backgrounds fared consistently worse than people with English as a first language although there was significant variability within and between these language groups. Queensland Health (2001) found that there were significant health and disease impacts for culturally diverse communities due to factors such as low socioeconomic status, inability to speak English, social isolation, discrimination and racism and inability find work.

In the academic literature there are four major views about why people are disadvantaged.

An ***individual perspective*** says that people are disadvantaged because of some problem with the individual. Sometimes this is the case, for example if someone is ill and unable to work. However at other times people may blame individuals for their problems ('he just is not trying hard enough to get a job') instead of recognising that there are structural reasons for people's problems.

An ***institutional perspective*** says that people are disadvantaged because of organisations and social institutions not working properly to meet people's needs (e.g. a doctor conducting a consultation with a patient with limited English without using an interpreter). Disadvantage can be addressed by changing and improving these institutions.

A ***structural perspective*** says that people are disadvantaged because of oppressive and inequitable social structures (e.g. class, gender, capitalism, income distribution, institutional racism). For example not allowing students to speak in their own language or not employing people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Change to address disadvantage can occur through social action to challenge oppression.

A **post-structural perspective** says that people are disadvantaged because of lack of knowledge and shared-understanding of systems (how language is used, what is acceptable behaviour). For example not knowing how to 'act' in a job interview. Change can occur through developing shared understanding and shared meaning on issues and ways of doing things.

Understanding disadvantage experienced by a particular group or about a specific issue can assist in developing a strategy to challenge this disadvantage.

**Different ways of understanding the same issue ... why people who do not speak English experience difficulties in hospital.**

<b>View on why disadvantage exists</b>	<b>Examples – Going to Hospital!</b>
Individual perspective	'Because they don't speak English they have problems.'
Institutional perspective	Difficulties experienced because interpreters are not offered and arranged.
Structural perspective	Some newly arrived migrants and refugees experience disadvantage in the hospital system because they do not know that they can ask for an interpreter, or the powerful majority does not wish to provide accessible services.
Post-structural perspective	Some newly arrived migrants and refugees experience disadvantage in the hospital system because they are not fully aware of hospital processes such as knowing when to ask for an interpreter.

## *4. Social Exclusion / Inclusion*

Social exclusion is a term that is increasingly being used by government and in the community sector.

**Social exclusion** refers to those people who are disadvantaged and marginalised in our community – those people who have the least amount of power, who are ‘invisible’, and have little voice in our community.

*A multi-dimensional disadvantage, which severs individuals and groups from the major social processes and opportunities in society such as housing, citizenship, employment, adequate living standards and may be manifested in various forms, at various times and within various sections of the population (Barry & Hallet 1998:1)*

Studies of social exclusion have focused on exclusion from the labour market, economic exclusion (including poverty), exclusion based on social isolation, geographic or spatial exclusion and exclusion based on institutional processes and systems. Key indicators used to measure or examine social exclusion include levels of poverty, income levels, access to education, access to the labour market, family size, crime rates, community facilities and resources (primary and secondary) weight at birth of babies, literacy rates, overcrowded housing and owner occupied housing/rented accommodation/homeless, levels of community involvement, volunteering and rates of suicide

There are a number of reasons (structural issues in our society) why people might be excluded from community processes. For example :

- **they are seen as ‘different’** - e.g. have a disability or come from a different racial background or don’t speak English
- **they are not ‘seen’** - e.g. those who are socially isolated, live in disadvantaged areas or in remote areas.
- **they are seen as ‘less productive’** - e.g. unemployed, elderly, myths about migrants/refugees ‘ripping off the system’
- **they are seen as ‘less mature’** - children and young people

#### 4.1 CULTURE AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Culture is a constructed, dynamic and interactive process by which society determines its rules, structures, symbols, traditions, customs and institutions that mould all aspects of life (Woodward 1997). There is an interactive interdependency between culture and society. In multicultural societies such as Australia, discussions on race and culture have formed the basis of nation building and have determined who is included and who is considered the “other” (Stokes 1997, Vasta and Castles 1996). Castles et al. (1988) point out that Australian national identity has been forged on a process of exclusion and racism of indigenous and ethnic minorities.

The discussions on social exclusion in the early 1970s and 1980s related more to social exclusion on the basis of culture, language, ethnicity and racism on material or distributional elements of exclusion such as access to social resources, access to the labour market and financial support. Contemporary thinking on this is not only focusing on *distributional* but to *relational* dimensions of stratification and disadvantage such as recognition of identity, racism at societal level and the nature of relationships between communities, government and others.

Power relations in social structures, institutions, systems shape the way in which minorities participate, some existing, others are emerging. Social exclusion on the basis of culture and ethnicity happens in multiple ways:

**Distancing**- majority having the power to set norms and marks a cultural distance from minority groups;

**Indifference**- hidden form of exclusion when no attention, respect, sympathy or understanding is shown to minority community;

**Stigmatisation**- negative stereotyping in the public sphere;

**Objectification**- seeing minority community in terms of superficial contributions such as food, dancing, costumes;

**Exoticisation**- seeing minority community as a source of fascination, weird, exotic; and

**Citizenship** – determining the social place of particular groups of people through different citizenship rights for minorities, refugees and older immigrants.

Combating social exclusion based on culture, race and ethnicity is not a simple task. Many complex factors operate simultaneously. It is useful to draw upon the notion of *intersectionality*, which seeks to examine multiple causes of exclusion or disadvantage such as ethnicity, class, gender. Darling (2002:2) points out that *intersectionality* is about when two or more types of disadvantage or discrimination that compounds the exclusion or disadvantage people experience. For example a person can be excluded on the grounds of race and gender at the same time or disability or gender. Intersectionality shows how different forms of exclusion intersect and understanding exclusion is multi-layered and complex.

Although discriminatory systems can operate across the board they are not always visible or acknowledged. Often what appears as universal or fair treatment has ways in which discriminates against particular groups of people. The pervasiveness can also give the impression that this is 'normal' state of affairs and exclusion is not happening (Zelinka 1996). Furthermore, any form of social exclusion is experienced subjectively and therefore relative to individual, group or environment. To what extent one can draw generalisations and draw out the subjectivity from the facts of the exclusion remains in contention.

Rosaldo (1989) suggests that our own experiences enable us to develop particular kinds of insight with particular kinds of force and intensity. In the combating of social exclusion based on cultural diversity, racism and ethnicity there is a need for what Dilthey (cited in Shields 1996) refers to a method of 'empathetic understanding' that allows for intersubjective and intercultural meaning to be established by moving away from one's cultural and social position into the 'other's' viewpoint.

Mrs. Das arrived from India with postgraduate qualifications in information technology. Her qualifications were recognised prior to arrival in Australia. She has found it difficult to find employment in Australia. She has received different responses: she has no Australian work experience, people cannot understand her accent, she is overqualified, there are no vacancies, the position was based on merit and she did not meet the requirements. She has not understood why she did not meet the merit requirements. After two years of seeking work she has found employment in a small private company. People make fun of her accent and one male employee is making inappropriate moves towards her. She feels isolated and powerless to do anything about the situation. This case study illustrates the complex nature of exclusion on the basis of systemic discrimination, immigration, culture and gender.

An aim of our work in overcoming structural disadvantage is to enable people to become 'included', empowered and active members of the community.

## 4.2 SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion is about an inclusive approach so that people do not feel 'shut out'. It involves entry points for vulnerable communities and establishment of human relationships.

**Social Inclusion** is people wanting to participate as valued, appreciated equals in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the community (i.e. in valued societal situations) and to be involved in mutually trusting, appreciative and respectful interpersonal relationships at the family, peer and community levels (Crawford 2003:7)

At a more systemic level, social inclusion is about overcoming structural barriers and extending rights to the most vulnerable thereby strengthening processes and outcomes that lead to equality. It is a process that may manifest itself as a struggle for space in public arena and policy making. It is an area of struggle in terms of recognition as an issue, appropriate resource allocation and interventions that may involve partnerships with many stakeholders.

The key elements of social inclusion include access to social goods and services with appropriate resource allocation; empowerment of communities who are skilled and have genuine participation in decision making structures of society, institutional trust and building democratic governance bodies, and building understanding and bridges between people.

## *5. Some Guiding Principles*

Working in any human service areas entails making judgments that are moral and ethical. They often have a vision or aspiration for society or community such as achieving human happiness, satisfying needs or alleviating suffering. These moral judgments often lead to action and impact on the life chances of our communities and client groups. There are numerous choices or dilemmas that face us in our work and having a set of principles or values form a framework from which to achieve social change. These principles are universal, i.e. it can be applied across communities, cultures and people. These principles can also be useful for helping us to put our work in perspective in terms of the overall goals we want to achieve and how we want to achieve them. They can provide a guide for action and decision-making. Understanding principles and using them to guide us in our work can also give us confidence that we are working appropriately to achieve change.

**Social justice** is a principle that emphasises dignity and rights and is the basis for working with marginalized communities. It recognises that disadvantage is often due to inequalities in society rather than only being the fault of the individual or group concerned. It focuses on opportunities, equality and fairness. Social justice is often defined in terms of access, equity, rights and participation.

### **ACCESS**

**Access** refers to the ability of community members to easily use a service or contribute to the community. Sometimes people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds face a number of barriers to effectively accessing services. For example, a parent from a non-English speaking background may want to participate in their child's school parents and citizens association - however they may not feel comfortable communicating in English. As a result they may be reluctant to become actively involved or feel that cannot be part of the group.

Access has a number of elements:

**Physical access** convenient location, outreach, inviting buildings, multilingual signs and poster, easily reachable (transport), easy entry (e.g. wheel chair and pram friendly) will enable better physical access.

**Psychological access:** This relates to people's mindsets in entering new places or participating in events. Welcoming people's views, confidence to connect and form relationships, knowledge of how to behave, openness to differences in



styles, overcoming feelings of fear and powerlessness are key elements of psychological access.

**Relational access:** Refers to the ways to form good relationships. Key elements to take into account include attitudes of staff, non-judgmental approaches, personal contact and not automated customer services, appropriate information, communication styles, use of interpreters, sensitivity to cultural norms, respect and acceptance and giving enough time.

**Procedural access:** Refers to making systems and processes simple. Complicated systems and processes, technical language and jargon, lack of clarity in program components, conflicting information, complicated technology, lack of policies in relation to diversity, lack of interpreters and multilingual materials and layers of bureaucracy make for poor procedural access.

**Cultural access:** appropriateness of norms and values e.g. definition of family, child, older adult; communication and language issues, gender issues, types of services and programs developed reflect mainstream approaches and does not incorporate other perspectives, issues around times and appointments.

## **EQUITY**

**Equity** refers to a process where everyone is treated fairly and without discrimination. **Equality** refers to the *same treatment* in dealings, quantities or values. **Equity** refers to *fairness* which may require different treatment, or special measures, for some persons or groups especially when the playing field is not level. **Formal Equality** is concerned with *equality of treatment* - treating everyone the same, regardless of outcomes. This can lead to serious inequalities for groups that have been disadvantaged by a system that fails to take their situations and perspectives into account. **Substantive Equality**, or **Equity**, is concerned with *equality of outcomes*.

Service providers sometimes misunderstand equity principles. They might think that simply because their service is accessible and people from diverse cultural backgrounds are using their service that their service is also equitable. This lack of understanding can have major consequences for people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example, a hospital that provides services without taking into account the cultural needs, such as interpreters, is providing equal access – i.e. everyone can use the service. However, those who do not speak English will not use the service as much as those who do speak English, thus the result is not equal. To achieve equal health outcomes for everyone equity measures needs to be in place, such as provision of interpreters. Thus, achieving equity may require special measures such as programs, services, policies, procedures and plans to achieve equal outcomes.

Achieving equity requires empowering people at the individual level. For example if a person wants to utilize an interpreter when interacting with government departments then the person needs to be able to act on this. If an interpreter is not offered by the government department staff member it is necessary for (1) the person to *know* that there is a policy relating to interpreters and individuals can utilize an interpreter (have knowledge that government departments are obliged to provide an interpreter), (2) be able to *assert* that they require an interpreter rather than simply walking away or trying to continue without an interpreter (the interpreter cards are useful for helping people to assert themselves), and (3) be able to insist on calling an interpreter if they are refused or stalled (for example if they are told that no one knows how to contact an interpreter or that they will have to pay).

## **RIGHTS**

**Rights** are an important aspect of social justice. Most of the rights of individuals in Western democratic societies derive from human rights and the idea of a common humanity. This is formalized through a range of international agreements that governments sign within United Nations frameworks and then it is introduced into national laws. It is necessary for rights to be ***clearly understood*** as well as ***guaranteed and enforced*** for all people. Human rights have tended to concentrate on civil and political rights. There are however, other types of rights such as economic, social and cultural rights. While rights are generally exercised by individuals, there is a strand of human rights thinking examining collective rights such as minority group rights.

The discussion on rights is not only about what rights an individual has but also what responsibilities and obligations must be met. The state has an obligation to ensure that the human rights of its citizens are protected through mechanisms such as the law, police and courts; provide equality before the law; and adequate provision of services such as health, education, employment. In return the individual must obey the laws, have respect for democratic process, ensure participation in civil society and exercise their rights. For example, as a citizen of a country you may have the right to vote. However, the responsibilities that accompany the right to vote includes the individual going out and voting, understanding the electoral process, being registered to vote and respecting the outcome of elections.

Although rights are granted to people through law or in policy it does not mean people can exercise these rights. Often, due to structural disadvantage, people's rights may not be fully met either because they are not aware of their rights or because there are barriers to fully asserting their rights.

Rights are conferred through the constitution of a country, through legislation and/or policy statements. For example, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship make the following commitment to its citizens:

- The right to equity and freedom from barriers based on race, ethnicity, culture, gender and other differences,
- The right to participate fully in the community, and to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background. ([www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au))

It is important for:

- (1) people to know their rights,
- (2) people to assert and define their rights, and
- (3) people to exercise their rights.

At the organisational level it is necessary to uphold rights to ensure that individuals do not necessarily have to know, assert or exercise their rights - rather these rights are simply met irrespective of the barriers relating to a person's cultural or linguistic background.

## **PARTICIPATION**

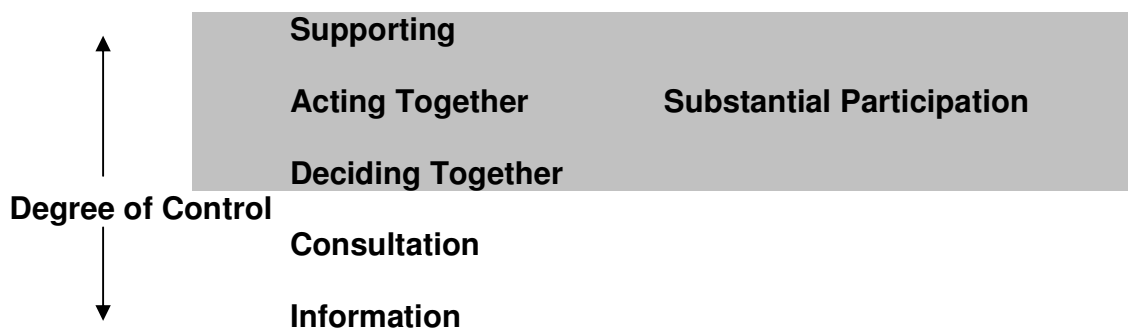
From a social justice perspective, *participation* involves promoting the active involvement of people in activities that impact on their lives. Participation is seen as a key to community building and development and as a way in which people can take responsibility for determining their lives. Participation is thought of as a positive attribute of democratic societies which enables individuals, citizens and communities to take part in social systems of government, of community organisations and in all aspects of civil society. There are many benefits of participation including building a sense of community, ownership of project or service, development of shared vision, overcoming apathy and isolation, pooling resources, allowing for multiple perspectives and building skills and confidence of individuals and resources of communities. At a societal level participation is a fundamental right of being a citizen and exercising rights. When decision-making in society affects people, it is appropriate to support their right to participate in the structures and processes by which those decisions are determined. This is often a particularly relevant issue for government and community organisations.

There are different terms used to describe participation such as consultation, community engagement, civic engagement, partnerships and collaboration. These terms reflect the different levels of participation that can take place.

Participation is a continuum – from the point of no participation to maximum participation. Arnstein (1971) has developed a ladder of participation as follows:

<b>Citizen Control</b>	<b>Degree of Citizen Power</b>
<b>Delegated Power</b>	
<b>Partnership</b>	<b>Tokenism</b>
<b>Placation</b>	
<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Non-participation</b>
<b>Informing</b>	
<b>Therapy</b>	
<b>Manipulation</b>	

An alternative adaption of this model is as follows :



Adapted from [www.partnerships.org.uk/guide](http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide)

- **Information** – The least you can do is tell people what is planned or what the current situation is.
- **Consultation** – You offer a number of options and listen to the feedback you get.
- **Deciding Together** – You encourage others to provide some additional ideas and options and join in deciding the best way forward.
- **Acting Together** – Not only do different stakeholders decide to together what is best, but also they form a partnership to carry it out.
- **Supporting Independent Community Initiatives** – You help others to achieve what they want (with resources, advice, knowledge etc).

It is important that you as a worker (and the organisation you are representing) decide before trying to get people involved what level of participation you would like. This will of course depend on a variety of circumstances. Sometimes it is okay and necessary to simply provide information to people (e.g. you will not find accommodation in this area – it is better if you look elsewhere). At other times it is necessary to make decisions together about tackling issues.

If the aim is community development and social action – it is vital that the people most affected be involved in the overcoming the issue. This is the only way empowerment and community capacity building will occur.

### **Putting the Last Person First!**

A final word in relation to people's participation relates to putting the '**last person first**'. Often as a general rule, if we ensure that the needs of the most disadvantaged are met then those who experience lesser disadvantage will also have their needs met too. For example, in relation to finding accommodation if we work towards ensuring that refugee families who have been here for less than a year and who are unemployed obtain suitable accommodation, then it will probably be easier for a migrant family who has also been here for less than a year but is employed to find suitable accommodation.

It is important to note that while participation is a key principle, not everyone can participate in social processes. This requires appropriate conditions for participation, skills and expertise and confidence. Best human service practice involves ensuring the appropriate conditions for maximum participation.

For example ensuring the participation of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in library services requires a process that is responsive to clients' needs. This is based on communication and appropriate mechanisms for participation. Communication is a two-way process; it is necessary to inform people about services as well as listening to and hearing people's views about how their needs can be met. A response is effective if people are satisfied that their needs have been met in an appropriate and timely way. Simply consulting people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds will not achieve their active participation in library services unless their particular needs are responded to (e.g. regular library tours in languages other than English, order papers from different countries). Some ways in which libraries ensure participation in their services include multilingual materials about the library, public consultation processes and appropriate feedback on input received, multicultural reference committees, multi-lingual staff and suggestion boxes in different languages.

# 6. *Empowerment*

## 6.1 WHAT IS EMPOWERMENT

In every society there are multiple power relations. Power can be achieved through consent or through force. In everyday life each of us consents to the power relations in our environment. We often treat these power relations as normal or natural. This is referred to as 'hegemony'. Hegemony operates through subtle processes of concealing, distorting and deflecting. These methods enable individuals to go along with disadvantage without realising why they are disadvantaged. Some of the areas in which power relations are formed are: systems of knowledge and information, procedures and processes, tactics, strategies, technologies, organisations, personalities, language, symbols, authority, boundaries and ethics. These power relations lead to multiplicity of domination, disadvantage or oppression experienced differently by different groups in society.

Empowerment is an important way of challenging disadvantage. **Empowerment** means the process of '*increasing the power of the disadvantaged*' (Ife, 1995:56).

*Empowerment is a process that alters the individual's perception of their problem and of society. It raises awareness of how power is exerted and of the identities of subordinate groups (Sherry Arnstein, 1971)*

As described above, social institutions can work in ways that sometimes disadvantages some individuals, groups or communities. For example, a neighbourhood group may not be welcoming to new members and may not be open to new ideas. New members, at least for a time, experience disadvantage.

## 6.2 HOW CAN EMPOWERMENT BE ACHIEVED?

An empowerment strategy aims to increase people's power in their interaction with social institutions as well as in terms of the effects that social institutions have on people. This can be achieved in two ways:

- building up the skills, knowledge and experience of people (individuals, groups, communities) to have an impact on social institutions. For

example, individuals knowing how to use interpreter cards and to request an interpreter.

- changing social institutions to make them more accessible, responsive and accountable to all people. For example, a child health clinic organising parenting workshops or discussion groups with the assistance of an interpreter.

In the context of structural disadvantage, **empowerment** refers to developing knowledge, skills and resources that increase the capacity of people to act on their world.

Empowerment changes both the way people understand themselves and the way they understand society and the broader community. Empowerment is about getting people to realise that there are inequalities in 'the system' and that many of the difficulties that people experience are a result of an unjust system not simply due to personal inadequacies. Empowerment is about enabling people to become powerful and active individuals who have the ability to create change and overcome structural disadvantage. Empowerment is a process that enables people to take action to achieve influence over the organisations and social institutions that affect them.

#### **Three Strategies For Empowerment:**

**Distributive Strategies**- aiming to create awareness in society in order to bring about substantive equality in society, particularly in relation to access to resources, social goods and services;

**Human Development Strategies** – aiming to increase the skill and capacity of people to act on their own behalf; and

**Participative Strategies** – aiming to make institutional reforms to enable people to be involved in achieving social change (Payne 1997:208)

#### **WHAT EMPOWERMENT IS NOT!**

Empowerment is not simply about:

- providing services to people;
- providing information;
- having power over others;
- advocacy (advocacy can be the way people become empowered, empowerment is the goal).

### 6.3 SIGNS OF EMPOWERMENT

Achieving Empowerment requires disadvantaged communities to:

- Have confidence in their ability to manage their own affairs
- Increase in levels of participation in all elements of civil society
- Feel that they can collectively make a difference
- Have a sense of society and history
- Have a sense of belonging
- Overcome sense of helplessness and apathy
- Have a sense of fulfillment
- Be critically evaluate their society and reasons for disadvantage
- See new possibilities for society

### 6.4. LINKING THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

Linking the 'personal and the political' in the context of structural disadvantage means recognising that 'it is not only the individual's fault'. An empowering approach begins with the recognition that often an individual's experience of disadvantage is a result of an unfair and unjust society. An unjust society often leaves people feeling personally inadequate and powerless. For example *'I am only a migrant. I can't speak English. People don't seem interested in my opinion. I don't understand fully how things work here anyway'*.

By linking personal experiences with social disadvantage this person might instead think *'I am a migrant. Many others like me do not feel comfortable communicating in English. This does not mean that we don't have anything to contribute. We can contribute in our own languages through an interpreter. I can learn how things work and I am willing to participate and express my views. Coming from another culture gives me a unique perspective which I can share.'*

Linking the personal and the political raises people's consciousness by enabling community members to draw links between their own experiences and the wider social context. Linking personal experiences to bring about structural change is an important factor in the process of empowerment. There is more about linking the personal and the political in the next section under consciousness raising.



# 7. Advocacy

**advocate** – 1) to please in favour of; support or urge by argument; recommend publicly; 2) one who defends; vindicates, or espouses a cause by argument; an upholder; a defender *Concise Macquarie Dictionary*

**Advocacy** is a term to describe the process of enabling people to ‘**stand up for their rights**’. There are different reasons for advocating. Sometimes it is to bring about change and at other times it is to preserve things as they are. Advocacy always has a goal or an end to achieve. Some of these reasons to undertake advocacy are:

- To overcome material deprivation
- To overcome isolation and to develop human relationships
- To overcome loss of autonomy and to achieve self-determination
- To address gaps in services and programs
- To overcome negative stereotypes of particular groups
- To overcome economic and social stress
- To bring about coherence to service delivery
- To prevent a service from being closed

To advocate means speaking, acting and writing with minimal conflict of interest on behalf of the interests of a group of disadvantaged people. To advocate on behalf of people means that you protect, defend and promote their interests through being on their side and no-one else's; being concerned with their fundamental needs and being loyal and accountable to them in an empathic and vigorous manner (Advocacy Development Network 1999)

## 7.1. TYPES OF ADVOCACY

There are many different forms of advocacy and these may be used to promote the interests of individuals, groups or communities:

- **case advocacy**- to enhance client access to services and programs
- **self/individual advocacy** - asserting your rights yourself
- **citizen advocacy** - a citizen advocate assists another person to assert their rights. This form of advocacy has been used extensively in the disability sector
- **legal advocacy** - for law related issues. A lawyer can assist you with your legal problem and even speak on your behalf in court
- **cause advocacy**- to promote social change for the benefit of particular groups or all of society e.g. saving forests, stopping discrimination
- **system advocacy** - a group of people who come together to change something or get something that they don't have.

## **72. SYSTEM ADVOCACY**

**System advocacy is an important advocacy approach when working to achieve structural change.**

System advocacy is about individuals who work together in groups towards changing the 'system' of society in order to ensure people's rights. It includes working on changing policies and practices of organisations, government departments, and political parties through lobbying, campaigns, media and other social action.

In the community sector people sometimes confuse the system advocacy with citizen advocacy. System advocacy does not mean that you can speak on behalf of others (e.g. people who cannot speak English). System advocacy is a process whereby your role as a worker is to empower community members to be able to speak up for themselves either individually or together in a group. You may also be in a position where you advocate on behalf of a group of people to institutions. For example if there is a policy of a particular government department that is adversely affecting your client group or community you may make a case to the concerned department on behalf of the community.

## **7.3 ISSUES IN ADVOCACY**

It is important to identify whom you are advocating for and that you have their agreement to be their advocate. It is also important to identify the role of the advocate and role of the client/community and others. It is also important to clarify what action is to be taken. Failure to do this may lead to harmful consequences for the advocate, the client/community and others.

Advocacy is an active process and may be time consuming. An advocate needs to ensure that there is minimal conflict of interest as there may be more than one interest to consider e.g. interest of children in divorce issues. The advocate may also have particular ideas about the situation and this may form a conflict of interest with the client/community. An advocate is often in a position to make decisions that impact on client/community's life. Sometimes there is a conflict in that what a person/community wants may not be in their best interest. These issues become complex and require skilful dialogue and appropriate strategising.

There could be costs of advocacy to the advocate and those advocated. These need careful consideration. For the advocate it means time; lack of resources; emotional wear and tear; social rejection or ridicule (in some cases where people are negatively labeled if they rock the boat too much) and perhaps a loss of livelihood (depending on the issue). For the advocated the impact of the advocacy actions may not work and have detrimental outcomes (e.g. loss of support services); a community or person may be singled out; there may be

punishment for actions (e.g. withdrawal of resources); the client/community may not understand the processes of advocacy and may feel left out.

Finally, advocacy has a sense of urgency. It is not a question of doing your job in a routine manner. It will require commitment and bending over backwards to make small gains. It requires challenging systems, institutions and processes to achieve the desired outcomes. Advocates need to be mindful of not burning out.

## *8. Involvement of People*

People's participation is a key aspect of the process of achieving structural change. There are a number of reasons why people's participation is a critical in increasing people's capacity to act on the societal structures that affect them.

1. People understand their own needs better than anyone else.
2. All people and communities have strengths that they can build upon. Active involvement is a means by which people develop and are empowered.
3. People working together can achieve change.

### **8.1 TYPES OF PARTICIPATION**

**Numerative participation** refers to judging people's participation by the number of people involved. For example even if 500 people turn up to a community meeting – this does not mean that they all actively participated. This is not true participation.

**Contributive participation** refers to the participation that is achieved through people participating and contributing towards the process of change. However, if a worker or organisation does not fully involve people in decision-making and action towards change their participation remains simply in the form of contribution – they are not active partners in the change process. This is also not true participation.

**Empowering participation** refers to the process of people becoming their own advocates and change agents. In the community context, community capacity building is a new term that refers to people within communities developing the skills, knowledge and confidence to be in control of developing their own communities and working towards meeting their own needs. Community capacity building can only be achieved through empowering participation. Achieving participation is a complex process.

### **8.2 KEY QUESTIONS IN SECURING PARTICIPATION**

Some key questions need to be asked before embarking on participatory processes:

**What is the Context of Participation:** social, political, cultural, and economic

**What is the Purpose:** various purposes e.g. improve decision-making, encouraging ownership, commitment to social change

**What Scale:** regional, local, statewide, national, international

**Who:** many stakeholder groups, conflicting interests, being more representative

**Power:** what levels of power sharing is possible

**Stage:** at what stage of project process is participation most effective, e.g. over consultation, some people do not want to be involved in decision making, information

**Constraints:** capacity of institutional support, level of resources to support people, capacity of staff to facilitate participation, capacity of participants, and the processes used (e.g. meetings, small group work)

People's active participation and contribution to the process of overcoming structural disadvantage and inequality is vital if communities are to become empowered.

There are a number of barriers to successful participation for people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These are often related to both factors in our own society as well as factors from the society that individuals have come from.

Many people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have experienced marginalisation, disadvantage and exclusion in our society. For example, they can be seen as 'different' or are sometimes not seen at all or are ignored (as an example, just ignoring the fact that clients from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may have specific needs). Often there are many myths perpetuated in the broader community about people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds or certain cultural groups (e.g. they are ripping off the system and they are all on the dole or that all the youth from that community hang out in gangs and are hooked on drugs).

Thus, there are a number of potential obstacles and barriers why people might not want to become involved.

- ⇒ **Preconceptions and attitudes about them** by the wider society which they disagree with (e.g. racist attitudes and stereotypes)
- ⇒ **Attitudes within your organisation** - are you excited and optimistic about people's involvement and give enough time or are you just doing it for the sake of achieving project milestones?
- ⇒ **Lack of awareness** - sometimes people are unaware that you want them to become actively involved.
- ⇒ **Limited experience** - sometimes people avoid becoming involved because of their lack of experience or unfamiliarity about the context or of formal processes (e.g. meeting structure).
- ⇒ **History of being ignored** - sometimes people have experienced a history of being ignored either in Australia or in the country they have come from. For example, certain groups within a community may have systematically been

ignored and oppressed and may not be willing to speak up in front of other members of the community or become involved in other forums. It is important even within ethnic groups to understand social structures and forms of exclusion that exist within the group based on their culture (e.g. women, older people, youth or people from a particular region or ethnicity may experience discrimination by the wider group).

⇒ **Fear of being involved** - will this take too much time? Will I be able to participate? What will happen if I share information? How will this information be used? Who else will be there? Sometimes people are fearful of authority figures (e.g. police officers/ teachers/doctors) due to past injustices.

## **A Checklist for People's Participation**

- Why is it important for people to become involved? Can you articulate this to them and others?
- Are you aware of who is most likely to be excluded or be reluctant to participate? Are you aware of why this is so?
  - history of being ignored
  - dynamics within a community
  - sense of powerlessness
- Have you taken the time to reach out to people, listen to them?
- Do you understand the obstacles that may prevent people from becoming involved?
- Have you assessed any attitudes in yourself or your organisation that might limit peoples' involvement (e.g. lack of enthusiasm)?
- Are you aware of yourself (your language, your attitudes, your clothes, your body postures, your relationships)? Do you consider yourself as in charge of the process of change or a tool to facilitate the process of change? Do you encourage people's voice, their participation, and their perspectives?
- How are you communicating? (Are you using too much jargon, are people happy with how they are being referred to, can people understand you, are you using an appropriate interpreter).
- Is the process accessible?
  - physical access (e.g. buildings, public transport etc)
  - language

- psychological - do people feel welcome and feel that their views are respected and participation valued?
- Are there enough resources to commit to the process?
  - time
  - transport
  - childcare
- Are there a variety of ways in which people can participate and show their commitment? E.g. cooking for the meeting, organising room set-up, transporting others.

### **8.3 TOOLS FOR CONTACTING PEOPLE AND PROMOTING PARTICIPATION**

There are different ways to contact people and encourage them to take part. The initial step in participation is to let people know. Some of the ways in which you can inform and connect with people are:

- ⇒ community forums / focus groups;
- ⇒ newsletters – providing information;
- ⇒ advertisements in ethnic media giving information about the issue and inviting people to become involved in various activities (e.g. consultation, community meetings etc);
- ⇒ contacting key community representatives (e.g. religious, community leaders). (REMEMBER! - Those who are 'excluded' and have low status within the community might not be contactable using traditional structures.);
- ⇒ action research (through people's involvement in research – people might be more interested to be involved in ongoing involvement relating to the issue).

A goal of all work with communities should be to maximise participation and inclusion (include rather than exclude even if people have a view that is opposing or different). This does not mean that everyone will participate in the same way. Different people have different skills, interests and capabilities. All people should feel that their contribution is necessary and valued. The more that people are involved the more they will feel community ownership and a sense of belonging to the entire process of achieving change. People's direct involvement is the only way to achieve empowerment!!!!

# *9. Legislative and Policy Frameworks*

A number of structures exist which form the basic framework for social justice within Australia. Within the scope of this publication it is not possible to analyse each of the policies, legislative or institutional arrangements. Suffice it to note that a range of arrangements provides a context in which forms the basis for inclusion and prohibit discrimination.

## **9.1 INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS**

At an international level, Australia is a signatory to a number of **international agreements** including:

- The International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - 1st and 2nd protocols
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- The Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
- The Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons
- The Convention on Refugees (1951) and its Protocol (1967)

## **9.2 NATIONAL LEGISLATION**

Within Australia, a range of **legislation** exists which provide the legal framework for immigration, multiculturalism and discrimination. These include:

- The Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- The Immigration Act 1958, 1988
- The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- A range of State Acts, for example the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender, race/ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability



### 9.3. POLICY FRAMEWORKS

A range of **policies or programs** exist to assist immigrants to settle in Australia and to value diversity:

- *The New Agenda for Multicultural Australia*
- *Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society*
- A range of State Policies, for example in Queensland *Multicultural Queensland- Making World of Difference* and the *Queensland Government Language Services Policy*

**9.3.1- The New Agenda for a Multicultural Australia** (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999:6) states that policies and programs in a multicultural Australia should be based on the principles of “civic duty, cultural respect, social equity and productive diversity”. These principles are based on a social justice perspective and highlight a number of rights and obligations.

The principle of **civic duty** refers to the obligation of all Australians to respect the structures of Australian society (constitution, parliamentary democracy etc). The principle of **cultural respect** refers to the right of all Australians to express their own culture and beliefs as well as respect the rights of others to do the same. The principle of **social equity** refers to the entitlement of all Australians irrespective of cultural background to equality of treatment and opportunity including freedom from discrimination. The principle of **productive diversity** refers to maximising the cultural, social and economic benefits of Australia’s diversity based on utilising the resources (such as language, skills and knowledge) of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Further information can be downloaded from website [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)

**9.3.2 -The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society** was adopted by the Commonwealth Government in 1998 and requires that all Government agencies take into consideration the needs of people of culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] background in the planning and delivery of their services. The Queensland Government has endorsed this Charter. The Charter applies not only to mainstream services provided by government, but also to services funded by government and provided by community organisations or the private sector. It outlines a range of principles regarding access, equity, communication, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, which agencies should consider when planning, and delivering services. The Charter represents a concerted attempt to move away from access and equity as an ‘add-on’ to government services and towards building cultural diversity considerations into the core processes of service delivery. Further information on the Charter can be downloaded from website [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)

**9.3.3 -Multicultural Queensland- Making World of Difference** is the blueprint for promoting multiculturalism in Queensland. The policy is based on the values of:

- Promoting the economic and cultural benefits of diversity
- Ensuring equitable access to programs and services regardless of cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds
- Assisting community development and participation and
- Promoting community relations and cohesion

The policy has four key strategies for implementation: *Productive Diversity Economic Strategy* harnessing cultural diversity in key areas such as trade, skilled migration, tourism and science/technology; *Supporting Communities*-funding Queensland's communities to further multiculturalism through research, policy development, advocacy, community awareness, festivals, services, and projects; *Strengthening Multiculturalism in the Queensland Public Sector*-changing the activities of Queensland Government agencies to deliver culturally sensitive programs and policies and *Community Relations and Anti-Racism* to ensure belonging and sense of community. The *Queensland Government Language Services Policy* reflects the recognition by the Queensland Government that a significant number of people do not speak English at all or well enough to communicate adequately with officers of the Queensland Government agencies. This policy that aims to address clients' communication difficulties and improve equitable access to programs, services and information within Government departments. Further information can be downloaded from website <http://www.premiers.qld.gov.au/library/pdf/MAQpolicy05.pdf>

## *10. Resources, Information & Relationships*

In order for people to actively participate and contribute it is necessary for them to have increased access and opportunities in relation to resources, information and relationships. These three dimensions are fundamental to ensuring participation and empowerment.

**Resources** - it may be necessary to invest resources in order to involve all community members e.g. time, effort, space, and money. For example transportation may need to be arranged (bus hire) or facilitated (car pooling) so that people can attend community events. Active people's participation is a process and does not occur overnight - it requires investment over a long period of time.

It is useful to think of the community's resources in terms of what they have control over and what they do not. **Primary Resources** are resources totally owned and controlled by the community; **Secondary Resources**: resources owned and controlled by others outside the community but which the community has access to (e.g. government services); and **Potential Resources**: resources which are not there in the community at the moment but can be made available to the community (these can also be divided into primary and secondary). The greater the primary resources in a community the stronger will be the participation of that community. Much of working towards structural change is directed towards increasing the primary resources of a community. It is useful to do a community mapping of resources. You will find that most of the resources in any community are secondary and therefore individuals and groups have less control over those resources.

**Information** - people need information to be involved in the community and 'to have a say'. Often people are simply unaware of what is available. Language plays an important role in communication and can be very powerful in relation to people's participation. Sometimes people do not understand the language being used (jargon and acronyms by workers) or disagree with the language that we use e.g. they might not like being referred to as a client or an old person or a person from a non-English speaking background. Information needs to be in a number of varied forms in order to reach people who cannot read or who have sensory disabilities or who understand a language other than English. The dissemination of information is also an important factor. Information needs to be

distributed through channels that reach the community- it is not enough to have them sitting in the office.

**Relationships** - everyone needs respect and equity in relationships in order to actively participate. It is necessary as workers to recognise our own power in relationships with people and also the system's structural power and how it affects people. For example - sometimes the people you most want to be involved as participants are reluctant because they have systematically been ignored in the past - they have experienced a history of being ignored (either in Australia or in their previous country). Often people's limited experience inhibits them from becoming involved - they may avoid become involved because they have never had much experience and are unfamiliar with the context (use example).

Relationships can take significant time to build. In many cultures trust needs to be earned and is not quickly gained. Communication is an important factor in establishing rapport with individuals and groups. Paying attention to language, body language, ways of referring, verbal and non-verbal behaviour are some factors to consider in communication. Empathy is fundamental in building relationships. For this to happen one needs to adopt a non-judgmental attitudes and 'walk in the shoes of the other'.

# *11. Ethical Considerations*

Ethics are moral judgments that we make in our lives. Ethics provide a basis on:

- Moral judgments about nature and human life: e.g. happiness, meeting needs, alleviating suffering
- Taking action based on morality
- Applying a universality test to morality and
- Justifying our actions.

As human service professionals there are some standards of ethical behaviour that each worker must abide with. These are provided by the professional bodies such as the Australian Association of Social Workers and by the code of conduct of the organisation you work for. There are ethical values that are employed in working with individuals or groups. These include:

•**Respect for the dignity and worth of the individual**

–Every person has a unique dignity irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, social and economic status, sexual preference, age, beliefs, or contributions to society.

•**The individual's right to self-determination**

–People have a right to express and hold their own opinions.  
–Focus on the client as the primary problem-solver, not the worker.

•**Affirmation of the uniqueness and individuality of each person**

–Be sensitive to each person's unique history, characteristics, and situation.

•**Confidentiality**

–Every individual has a right to confidentiality. Respect the privacy of clients and hold information in confidence.  
–Where clients are likely to hurt themselves or others the question of confidentiality has to be weighed against the risk. There are laws that govern this at times especially with regards to issues like child abuse.

•**Maintain Professional conduct**

–Addressed below

•**Maintain service standards**

–Implementing services in accordance with the needs of the client.  
–Taking account of the cultural relevance of the service and program to your client  
–Performing your duties to address the best interests and well being of your clients.

***Ethical Values in working more broadly with groups or communities are:***

**•Non-Discrimination**

- Against any group of people on the basis of belief, ethnicity/race, religion, sexuality, age, disability
- Respect for diversity

**•Non-Judgmental Attitudes**

- towards views that may be different than your own

**•Commitment to Social Justice and Equity**

- Working to overcome disadvantage, oppression, marginalisation and exclusion in any form

**•Commitment to Human Rights**

- Human rights as universal and the notion that each member of society is entitled to rights

**•Emancipatory/Empowerment Approaches**

- Ensuring the worker does not misuse power over communities
- Supporting communities to be in a position to effectively take control over all aspects of their lives

**•Sustainability of Communities**

- Working with communities to ensure long-term sustainability of the community without the worker
- Developing resources, skills and long-term strategies to ensure development of community.

In addition, we all have individual beliefs and values that guide us in our work - either consciously or sub-consciously. An example could be “I believe that all people should be treated with dignity and respect”.

It is important to be aware of our own beliefs and to constantly reflect on these in order to ensure that there is no conflict in our work - that is between our own values and the goals of community work. For example: “this group just goes round and round in their discussions and they take so long to make decisions - it’s so frustrating, I wish they’d just take a decision and be finished with it”. This goes against the goal of people’s participation and community capacity building.

Ethical practice also has a legal aspect. It is important to know what your statutory-legal obligations are. An example is mandatory reporting of certain behaviours you may get knowledge of or witness, such as child abuse. Another is ensuring duty of care and non-negligence in your work.

## **11.1 ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

A professional is someone who, through professional training and field education, has the requisite values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills to work autonomously, or with a team, in a social welfare agency or program intended to promote, relieve or restore the social functioning of individuals, families, social groups or larger communities. This requires a particular set of behaviours that are

considered ethical and professional. Ethical professional conduct usually involves:

- Being **Effective**: Achieving tasks, meeting timelines and appointments, ensuring competency and knowledge to complete your tasks.
- Knowing who you are **Representing**: Maintaining the boundaries of when you are representing the organisation and when not.
- Maintaining appropriate **Detachment**: Not getting so emotionally involved that your judgment is biased.
- Maintaining appropriate **Presentation**: Includes appropriate dress for the occasion, appropriate voice and body messages, sensitivity to client and community behaviour codes.
- Taking **Responsibility**: Being aware that you and your organisation have a legal duty of care and non-negligence in undertaking your work.
- **Continual Learning**: Using every opportunity to upgrade your knowledge and skills.

## 11.2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are many situations that may involve a conflict of interest in your work. A conflict of interest exists when the person is in a position of trust that requires the person to exercise judgment on behalf of others (people, institutions.) but this may conflict with other interests or obligations and might interfere with the exercise of his/her judgment. The conflict of interest depends on the situation, and not on the character and actions of an individual. It relates to the impartiality, bias and ethical nature of actions and decisions.

Conflict of interest refers to the conflict that might develop if:

- you are likely to make personal or business gain out of a situation ;
- you are compelled to act in a way that is not in keeping with your preferred or agreed upon way of acting or strategy. (Will my position be compromised?)
- If you are faced with conflicting situation in which you need to make judgments against different stakeholders e.g. agency policy may be contrary to what community wants
- If you are in a position to represent conflicting interests e.g. in your role as worker and at the same time as leader of your community

It is important to avoid conflict of interest situations, as it will undermine your credibility and respect as a professional work. Even the perception of conflict of interest will reflect badly on you, your employer and your profession. If you find yourself in a conflict of interest situation, it is best to disclose your conflict of interest and extricate yourself from that position and not to take part in any decision-making processes. It is acceptable to declare your conflict of interest as a reason for not taking part in any process.

The *Code of Ethics* of the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers specifies the responsibilities of a worker to their employer and as a professional.

The responsibilities to the Employer includes:

- o Carry out the duties and responsibilities outlined as terms of employment;
- o Assist in promoting the stated aims of the employing organisation in terms of policy, procedure and practice;
- o Distinguish in public statements or behaviour whether acting as an authorized spokesperson of the employer or in a private capacity;
- o Use professionally approved channels to express criticism of employment practices which are detrimental to the profession;
- o Be accountable to the employing organisations for the full discharge of duties - except where such contradicts this code of ethics.

Further information on the code of ethics of the professional body may be found on <http://www.aiwcw.org.au/codeOfEthics.html>

Jenny, a community development worker, was invited to be a part of grants advisory committee for a government department. The organisation that she was working for has also applied for the grant. Jenny found herself in a conflict of interest position, as she is required to make an unbiased recommendation from the competing applications for funding. When the grant application of her organisation was being discussed Jenny declared her conflict of interest and left the room while the rest of the panel was discussing her organisation's application. She resumed on the panel to review other applications without asking about what was the outcome of her agency's application.

### **11.3 USE OF POWER**

Understanding participation involves understanding power: the ability of different people to achieve what they want. Power often depends on who has information and money. It also depends on people's confidence and skills.

Having a wish list is of little use if a community cannot put it into practice. The ability to do this often depends on people's confidence and skills. Therefore many participation processes involve building confidence and skills. It is often unrealistic to expect individuals or small groups to suddenly develop the capacity to make complex decisions and become involved in major projects. They need training and the opportunity to learn formally or informally to develop confidence as well as trust in each other.



As a worker, you will often be in a position of power – you will probably have greater access to information and funds as well as have the confidence, skills and authority to become a leader in the change process.

How you use this power will directly determine the success in achieving change. Yes, it is sometimes possible to have some good wins even if people are not involved – however an aim of our work is to share knowledge, skills and enable people to develop their own experience so that communities can develop the capacity to become their own agents of change. A lot will depend on your own style as a worker.

Working towards structural change often involves changes to existing power structures. This might cause resistance to change by some key stakeholders. Therefore, conflict resolution and negotiation are important skills to have when dealing when pushing for changes to power structures – no one likes to give up control and power and there will probably significant resistance to this.

#### **11.4 APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATION**

Working to achieve change often means that we are in positions where it is necessary to represent people's views and interests. There are some very important questions that need to be explored in relation to representing people.

- Do I have people's permission to represent them?
- Have I actively listened to people? Do I understand their need from their perspective? Am I appropriately communicating their beliefs and their decisions?
- Have I explored all options for ensuring that the people most affected are representing themselves?
- Am I standing beside people? Or standing behind people? Or standing before people?
- Am I pushing my own agendas and not that of the community I am working with?

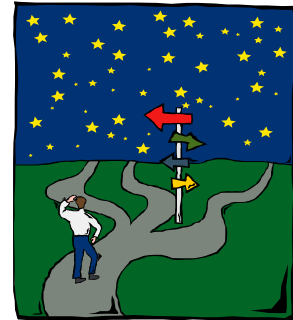
Therefore it is important to establish your mandate to represent people on a particular issue – without this mandate you will probably cause more damage and place your representation at risk. No one likes for someone else to speak on their behalf without them knowing about it.

SECTION 2:

STRATEGIES FOR  
CHANGE

## 12. Getting Strategic

An important part of our work to achieve change is being **strategic**. Simply, being strategic means knowing about our options and making informed decisions about which option would be best to achieve our goal.



When working on community issues, the first step in being strategic is knowing which method would be most effective for achieving change. There are a number of approaches we can take when working on community issues. These are:

- **Community Development**
- **Social Planning and Social Policy**
- **Social Action**

We have the choice of using one of these approaches on its own or a combination of the approaches. For example we may be working on the issue of social isolation for youth from new and emerging refugee communities. Through the community development approach we might decide to form a competitive soccer team so that young people can build new friendships as well as participate in a mainstream community activity. Through the **social planning and social policy approach** we might decide to consult the young people directly and do a needs analysis that we could use to inform government decision makers and local community organisations. Though the **social action approach** we might decide to try and get some media coverage (such as through the profiling of one young person's story) so that the wider public could become more aware of the difficulties and isolation that refugee young people are experiencing.

Understanding these approaches is useful for helping us to become strategic – knowing that approach to use when.

The purpose of this section is to explore the dimensions of these three approaches.

# *13. Community Development*

Community development is concerned with change and growth – with giving people more power over the changes that are taking place around them, the policies that affect them and the services they use. It seeks to enable individuals and communities to grow and change according to their own needs and priorities. It works through bringing people together to share skills, knowledge and experience. There are three key features of community development: First, it is non-institutional intervention, i.e. it is not something that government or other social organisations do to people. It is about activities at a level that the community is comfortable with such as local, community or neighbourhood levels; second, it does not involve individuals but works with broader communities or groups. It is this collectivizing feature is what gives community development its social change potential; third, it is a non-traditional intervention, that is, it is not something ‘done to people’ but rather the worker works alongside his or her constituents.

Thus, the community development approach focuses on enhancing the wellbeing (social, cultural, economic) of a local community. The overall aim of community development is enabling people to increase their competency to solve problems in their community through working together to achieve change. Participation of individuals and groups in their own affairs is a fundamental element of community development due to an intrinsic commitment to the idea that ordinary people possess the means and skills to achieve their own goals and ambitions. Community development involves people working together to overcome collective experiences of disempowerment. It is a style of collective action based on ideas and values such as cooperation, mutual respect and solidarity.

There are three main approaches for doing community development:

- community building,
- community education and
- community organisation.

## **13. 1 COMMUNITY BUILDING AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

An important goal of community development is **community building**. Community building involves bringing people together as a group to achieve some common goals. In bringing people together an important process is

helping them to communicate with each other in a way that leads to greater understanding both of community issues and also how their own personal issues can be located in broader social/community issues.

Community Building is also called building **social capital**. Social capital has a wide definition but essentially involves the capacity of people to work together to resolve common problems. To build communities there is a need to build social capital. Key features of developing social capital are establishing networks between people, encouraging reciprocity and obligation, relationships, building social trust and developing norms that are common such as values, ideas, attitudes, roles, belief frameworks and rules. Communities with high social capital have strong decision making capacity and can make change through informed decisions and options, ability to attract resources, group solidarity and cohesion, goal setting and review of achievements.

Social capital does not need to be physical assets. It can be economic but also social and cultural. For example languages spoken, education, and cultural knowledge are valuable elements of social capital and can facilitate community building.

*Features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions (Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1993:86)*

There are three dimensions of social capital:

- Bonding Capital
- Bridging Capital
- Linking Capital

*Bonding capital* involves building connections with people like you. An example could be an ethnic community getting together. This form of capital can be very useful in supporting a person or a group. It is whom you turn to in times of difficulty, strife or crisis. *Bridging capital* are connections with people unlike you, which is with cross sections of society. These connections are important if the community or individuals in that community are going to get ahead, find opportunities and secure resources. *Linking capital* are the ties across the social strata that can connect people and ensure that there is a development of bridging capital happening.

## **13.2 COMMUNITY BUILDING WITH NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

Migrating to Australia as either a migrant or refugee often involves a loss of community, networks and relationships - people leave the community they were previously a part of. This can lead to isolation and individualisation of problems (thinking 'I'm the only one with this problem'). Often newly arrived migrants and refugees are unaware of how to become involved in community life here and face barriers in accessing many elements of social life. This is combined with the broader community often being unsure of how to enable the participation of newly arrived migrants and refugees. Thus, many experience exclusion from the broader community.

Community building in the multicultural context often tries to re-establish the connections of individuals with a community. For example regularly attending group activities (craft group, bus trips, men's group) at a local migrant service agency assists people in getting to know other people as well as increasing their feelings of belonging to a community. As people go through stages of settlement they will find that they are initially connecting with people in their own ethnic communities or multicultural settings, which is bonding capital. This is a natural part of community building as people will draw support, develop skills and gain information and confidence to be able to venture into broader social settings.

Community building often occurs as a consequence of other community development activities. Many people feel uncomfortable just being brought together 'to talk and get to know each other'. It is often easier to establish relationships if there is a specific purpose for coming together (common sense of purpose). For example a community garden project achieves a number of aims including growing plants, increasing social interaction and strengthening bonds that make further development possible in the future. It is important to remember that the first step in community building is about bringing people together around issues of interest or concern.

Thus, community building is about bringing people together to get things done in a way in which each person can contribute. An aim of community building is to enhance opportunities for community members to be dependent upon each other to achieve their goals - this enhances participation as well as gives everyone an opportunity to contribute meaningfully and in a way that is valued by others.

## **CHECKLIST: COMMUNITY BUILDING PROJECTS.**

- high level of involvement of community members (group process)
- common sense of purpose (e.g. to grow the garden)
- encouraging people to work together (mutual dependence) to achieve tasks (e.g. the garden would not grow without people working together in planning, making joint decisions and doing work)
- opportunities for both formal and informal interaction (e.g. time out for a cup of coffee etc)
- inclusiveness - enabling people to contribute in a way that is meaningful and valued by others
- necessary for establishment of community level structures as well as future change activities
- ensuring conditions for participation (travel, child care, safety)
- enabling all to contribute- not domination by a few

# *14. Community Education*

**To learn is to change.**

**Good teaching is an art, not of putting ideas into people's heads but of drawing ideas out.**

**If you want lasting results, don't push. People will move by themselves once they see the need clearly and discover a way.**

**From 'Letter to a Teacher'.**

**Community education** is an important aspect of community development. Often people see disadvantage as natural state of society, as events that happen. They do not make the links between personal problems and societal outcomes. Popular culture, through such means as the media, reinforces the notion that people's problems are due to their own attitudes and behaviour. An example of this is the idea that people are unemployed because they are lazy, they are not motivated, they are not skilled or that they can get government payments. This view ignores the fact that there can be major problems with the labour market. People can often blame themselves for the problems, become helpless in the face of disadvantage and feel isolated. Therefore community education is very important in achieving structural change.

**Community education** refers to the process of raising the understanding of a community in relation to how individuals' personal experiences are affected by larger structural factors (e.g. unemployment, poverty, discrimination). Without this understanding it is often difficult to bring people together to achieve structural change. Community education is not simply about providing people with information – it is much more than this!

## **14.1 CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING**

In the literature, community education is sometimes referred to as '**consciousness raising**'. Consciousness raising is the process of enhancing the awareness of people in relation to the critical link between personal problems and structural disadvantage. For example, unemployment of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is often a consequence of structural factors including lack of recognition of overseas experience or lack of recognition of qualifications, lack of local work experience, and discrimination by employers. It is important that individuals understand the link between their own difficulties in finding unemployment and these structural factors.



**Conscientisation:** *This is a process by which people discover the meaning of humanity, it is a change of consciousness producing a more accurate awareness of one's place in nature and society (Paulo Freire 1972)*

Without this understanding they may individualise their own problem instead of seeing it in the context of a social problem - 'I'm just no good'. It is also important for others to understand how an individual's problems are related to broader structural issues. Without this understanding often people 'blame the victim' - 'he doesn't know how to go well in an interview that's why he can't get a job' or 'all refugees are queue jumpers'.

The benefits of consciousness raising are many. These include:

- Developing critical awareness of the cause of social problems
- Overcomes apathy and helplessness
- Greater self –acceptance, changed self-perception
- Greater self-esteem
- Energy to seek rights and change the situation
- Gaining of knowledge and skills
- Increasing participation
- Taking control of domains of personal and community life

## 14.2 HOW DO WE DO COMMUNITY EDUCATION?

Community education and consciousness raising can be done in a number of ways. Activities of community education recognise that there are different levels of awareness, that there is a direct link between emotions and the motivation to act and that transformation must come from the grassroots. It is not something that experts can do to another. For these reasons community education needs to target:

- *Values:* no education is neutral, it carries values and philosophies which maintain existing situations of disadvantage;
- *Relevance:* issues must be of importance to the participants
- *Problem-posing:* recognizing that participants are thinking, creative people with the capacity to solve problems and take action
- *Dialogue:* recognizing that social issues are complex and that no one has the right answer. Through dialogue people listen, share experiences and learn from each other
- *Reflection and Action (Praxis)-* where action can take place through critical reflection on the problems, ways to overcome these problems and what skills, training and resources are needed to achieve outcomes.

Group discussions such as through learning circles are a powerful form of consciousness raising. Creative artists play an important role in terms of community education through drama, film, literature and art.

The media also plays a role in informing people about community issues - for example local ethnic radio programs can be utilised to provide information on an issue. Community campaigns such as health promotion campaigns are also an effective means for informing people on an issue. Although using the media and community campaigns is not a two-way dialogue they are useful for beginning the process of consciousness raising.

### **EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION ACTIVITIES:**

- **learning circles**
- **community information meetings around an issue**
- **group work and community development activities that give people the opportunity to discuss their personal situations either informally or formally (e.g. craft classes, women's groups etc).**
- **community arts projects e.g. drama, art, literature (including oral history projects), film.**
- **using the media to inform about an issue (both mainstream media and ethnic media)**
- **community campaigns to inform around an issue**
- **Posters, stickers, T-shirts, brochures, pamphlets**
- **Videos, CDs other visual material**
- **Training manuals and kits**
- **Websites**
- **Conferences, seminars, public forums**
- **Information stalls (at markets, shopping centers, festivals)**

Consciousness raising can also occur during other activities such as English classes in which people come together for another purpose but in the process through their informal interactions draw links between their own personal issues and structural disadvantage. Such interaction is often important for deeper understanding as well as empowering a person around an issue.

A potential problem of community education and consciousness raising activities is that the worker can dominate discussion in order to push their own viewpoint. There is a danger that as a worker you will impose your own perspective and understanding relating to an issue - this can reinforce structural disadvantage by taking away people's voice and contribution to issues. Writers such as Paulo Freire (1972) highlight the need for community education and consciousness raising to be a *dialogical relationship* – i.e. a two-way relationship, based on genuine dialogue. Community education is not about imposing your views. The

role of the worker is one of facilitator, supporter, advocate and of posing critical questions to enable dialogue and exchange. It is the role of the worker to guide the education process so that participants can 'unveil' the causes of social problems. People will remember much better through such a learning process of self-discovery than when they are lectured to. It is important for the worker to summarise the conclusions reached in group situations and build on the contribution of participants when they have sufficient time to discuss the issues. It is important for the worker to develop a good learning climate, have good facilitation skills, and be sensitive to group dynamics.

**“Consciousness raising must not be seen as a one-way process, but is rather a two-way dialogue where each party shares perspectives, understandings, and world views in such a way that both will learn from the process and together develop a deeper understanding. Thus the approach of the community worker is not one of superiority, seeking to ‘educate’ another, but rather one of a human being seeking to engage in dialogue with another human being, where each will respect the other’s wisdom, and where the goal is to develop a new understanding together which will lead to action” (Ife 1995:148).**

It is important for community education programs to target both raising the consciousness of individuals directly affected by structural disadvantage but also the broader community understanding, attitudes and beliefs which impact on individuals.

## **CHECKLIST: COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROJECTS.**

- **The aim is to increase understanding how people's personal experiences are affected by structural issues and disadvantage.**
- **The discussion must be a two-way process where worker and community members have an opportunity to share their opinions and perspectives.**
- **It is not a dominating process where the worker simply shares their beliefs (professional or personal) about a situation without entering into a dialogue. It is dialogue and sharing around an issue which will lead to deeper understanding for both worker and community representative**
- **It can target individuals directly affected by structural disadvantage and also broader community understanding, attitudes and beliefs.**
- **The process can be time consuming and very difficult - especially when people are used to simply listening to the view of the 'expert' and not thinking about their own perspective on an issue.**
- **From a community development perspective the most effective form of consciousness raising is that which leads to active participation of people in community processes and which motivates them to seek to do something to improve an issue**
- **It assists people to change both the way they view themselves and the way they view society.**

# 15. *Community Organisations*

Another important aspect of community development relates to how a community organises itself in order to deal with its problems and work towards responding to structural disadvantage. It is difficult for individuals to work in isolation. There is often greater credibility given to concerns of a community rather than concerns of an individual. For example a registered community organisation can play a valuable role in representing the views of its members on a particular issue.

Thus, in the Australian context it is often necessary to develop community structures that promote the participation of community members. Community development and social change activities often take place through community organisations. Community organisations are not-for-profit organisations and work either autonomously or semi-autonomously from government. Examples of community organisations include community centers, neighbourhood centers, ethnic community organisations, service agencies, community arts groups, women's organisations and youth agencies, just to name a few. Community organisations are found all over the world and sometimes referred to as the *non-profit sector*, *community sector* and *non-governmental organisations* (NGOs). All community organisations have aims and objectives. On many occasions, depending on the structure of the organisation, these are written in the constitution of the organisation.

These structures of community organisations can be both formal and informal. In both cases there is a membership of community organisations. It can be a loose membership or more formal membership with fees payable to join. An informal structure may be a network of people who come together regularly for social activities or for another purpose such as a religious group. There can be large multi-functional agencies with Board of Directors, community based agencies with management committees, collectives and public companies. Formal registration of community organisations has legal and accountability requirements that must be met. The structures of community organisations determine how decisions are made, who has responsibility for what, what activities take place, and what accountability requirements exist. Most community organisations have meetings and committees. Thus it is important for workers to be familiar with committee structures and processes and understanding of meeting procedures.

In the multicultural context in Australia, community organisation is an important aspect of community development and especially in responding to cultural diversity. Individual ethnic community organisations as well as the broader

representative organisations can play a valuable role in terms of representing the views of their members to government agencies and the community more broadly. Sometimes language and cultural barriers may prevent individual members from doing this.

Community organisations evolve through different stages from its moment of formation, to growth, stagnation and in some cases closure. The size of community organisations varies depending on the issue and focus of the agency. Some organisations employ large numbers of staff while others do not employ any. Many community organisations rely on volunteers to run the organisation. Staff of community agencies (unless it is a collective) are not members of the agency and are paid employees. Management committee members or directors are usually honorary positions and are not paid.

More information on community organisations may be found on the 'Community Door' website of the Department of Communities, <http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo/>

### **Community organisation characteristics:**

It is important for communities to organise themselves in order to deal with problems.

Communities can organise themselves both formally and informally.

Community organisation should promote people's participation.

Community organisations give a stronger voice to community concerns.

Community organisations evolve through different stages of formation and growth.

Community organisations usually have a management structure that determines how decisions are made and the levels of authority.

# 16. Social Policy

## 16.1 WHAT IS SOCIAL POLICY?

A social problem is a condition that at least some people in a community view as being undesirable. Social policy is the intention and deeds of a government to find a solution to a particular social problem. *Social Policy* may be defined as a plan or course of action, goals and strategies intended to address a particular social problem or issue. It is a tool of governance that enables the direction of resources and action to particular areas. Other words are used to describe policies of government such as public policy or economic policy.

### Uses of the Word 'Policy'

- ◆ **Policy as stated intention** – to take particular action or bring about change (e.g. *we will continue to improve health services for children*)
- ◆ **Policy as current or past action**- unspecific all embracing term (e.g. *the government's policy has been to improve access to public health services for everyone*)
- ◆ **Policy as an organisational practice** – the rules and regulations of an organisation (e.g. *we have a no smoking policy at the workstations*)
- ◆ **Policy as an indicator of formal claimed status of action** (e.g. the Cabinet Community Services Committee laid down a clear policy that people working with children must obtain blue cards). (Levin 1997)

### Policy can be seen as:

- ◆ A label for a field of activity
- ◆ An expression of general purpose or desired state of affairs
- ◆ Specific proposals (e.g. by interest groups)
- ◆ Decisions of government
- ◆ Formal authorisation e.g. specific act or statute
- ◆ A program – a package of legislative and administrative arrangements
- ◆ Output – what government actually delivers
- ◆ Theory – if we do x then y will follow
- ◆ A process unfolding over a long period of time
- ◆ Related to politics but is not necessarily subordinate to it.

Social policy is a fundamental process in government activity. Social policy development is an important way in which government tries to achieve outcomes and change on community issues. It is an important means to responding to

people's social issues and need. Public servants and Ministers of government develop policies, make decisions about policies, oversee the implementation of policies and have discretion over the different stages of policy making.

Policies, however, are the outcome of competition of ideas, ideologies, interests that plays itself out in the political and public service arena. Policy development is a process whereby government priorities are determined and broad political objectives are translated into specific policies. Lindblom's (1980) influential work noted that the ends and means in policy making are rarely clear and are defined by resources or the changes in problems. Problems receive attention when they are urgent and tend to fade from view or are superseded by more important issues as they arise. Importantly he argued that policy changes are incremental, that is there is never a comprehensive search for alternatives and that policy makers prefer 'successive limited comparisons' with current practice, modifying existing programs to deal with arising issues.

Therefore it is vital that communities spend time working with government so that their perspective can be heard and taken into consideration in the policy development process. It is important to understand the policy cycle so that appropriate input can be made at the different stages. The policy cycle involves the different arms of government such as the Ministers and public servants. The political arm of government is called the "executive government" and is made up of elected parliamentarians. The engine of the executive government is the Cabinet. They make laws and take key decisions about government budgets. The administration of law and the implementation of decisions of government are undertaken by public servants.

The Cabinet is made up of all Ministers who make up the Government. Each area of government has a Minister associated with it e.g. Minister for Employment and Training or Minister for Education. An individual Minister can be responsible for more than one area (often called portfolio). Each area usually has a department and a head of department who is part of the Public Service. Heads of Departments are called different names. For example the Commonwealth Government department heads are called 'Secretary' while in Queensland Government they are called 'Director-General'. The head of the department oversees the work of the whole department and reports back to the Minister.

A department usually advises its Minister about policy-the nature of the issues, the type of policy, the costs involved and whether it is useful to have the policy. Public servants present policy options to the Minister and usually it will go to Cabinet for approval. Once approved the implementation is also the responsibility of the public service but they report to their Minister. Therefore, the Minister and public servants are key people to influence for policy change. For more information see [www.ozpolitics.info](http://www.ozpolitics.info)



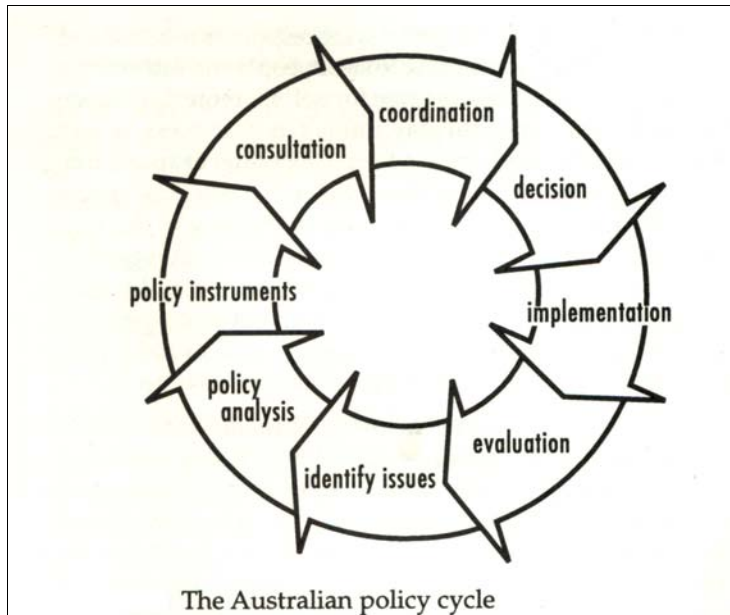
Social planning and social policy are mainly focused on exploring technical solutions for change on community issues (e.g. homelessness). Much government interaction with the community sector and the broader community more generally is about policy development: choosing policy, delivering policy and assessing the impact of policy. Many government activities such as community consultation are established to ensure that policy development is as accurate as possible.

Government policies have specific attributes. The policy usually belongs to a department or agency; it has a stated intention and commitment; and sets a course of action (strategies). The policies can result in many projects, services or activities. There are usually measurement indicators of the policy including *legislative measures* (acts of parliament); *public expenditure* and allocation of budgets; *organisational structuring* (creation of new departments or units) and variety of *management activities* (making appointments to positions, prescribing organisational practices and setting performance targets and reporting arrangements).

## **16.2 POLICY CYCLE**

Policy processes involve the interaction of a range of players such as public servants, cabinet ministers and other stakeholders such as community groups, peak industry organisations, unions and others. That is policy-making occurs through engagement of different players. As described above, the policy is adopted through the different parts of government (Ministers, Cabinet and Public Servants) working together on a particular issue. It takes place within a given context including the legal, environmental, the social and the political contexts.

The policy making is a cyclical process that usually follows a sequence and requires a synthesis of existing knowledge. The Australian Policy Cycle is represented in the following diagram.



**Diagram 1: the Australian Policy Cycle**

Source: Bridgman & Davis, 1998:24

Policy cycles usually begin with *identifying* issues. Problems or issues emerge in a number of ways such as issues raised by interest groups, in the media or by public demand for government action. This is an important point in getting involved in the policy process as many issues compete and some do not make it to the agenda at all.

Once the issue has caught the government's eye, the next step is *policy analysis*. This is often undertaken by public servants to identify all aspects of the issue concerned and allow for rational decision-making, planning and formulation of solutions. Usually policy experts identify nature of the problems drawing research, expert opinions and public debates. They determine policy parameters in terms what priority it is, look at goals, values, do cost benefit analysis, draw parameters for decisions, establish timelines and present options to decision makers. If community groups have undertaken research or have any evidence they have collected this would be useful time to present it to the public servants.

Once government intervention is seen as appropriate, then policy analysis leads to identification of appropriate *policy instruments* as a response to the issues. Some problems require legislation. The policy instruments and methods of intervention need to be appropriate as they can cause a community backlash.

Once the analysis is completed and the policy options are identified, the feasibility of the proposed response is tested through public *consultation*. Consultation occurs with external stakeholders as well as with agencies in government. Consultation enables a number of functions. It builds support for

policy, it tests the proposed responses, it seeks other ideas, it informs the community and leads to an improvement of the policy. There are different types of consultation including focus groups, ministerial meetings, written submissions and on line submissions. This is a key part of engagement for communities in the policy process.

Once the policy is ready for consideration by the government then *coordination* is needed across the different players in the policy process. This requires working out funding arrangements from treasury, who makes decisions and which departments are to be involved in the implementation of the policy. This process of the cycle is followed by decision-making and usually involves briefing cabinet and obtaining a *decision* from cabinet about policy options.

Once the policy is adopted as a government policy, then there is its *implementation* which is usually through its identified strategies such as legislation, programs, services or other means as agreed by cabinet. The final stage of the policy is *evaluation* so that government can gauge whether the policy has been effective, whether it needs rethinking. The policy cycle is a continually turning process.

### **16.3 POLICY ADVOCACY: HOW CAN WE INFLUENCE SOCIAL POLICY?**

An important way in which we can influence government is through participating in the policy development activities of government. Policy advocacy seeks to influence policy outcomes through:

- assertion that particular problems are of interest to the policy agenda of that department or Ministry
- understanding the differing plays of power in the policy process
- understanding differing interests – who wins or gains (e.g. in budgets of policy implementation)
- understanding the historical and organisational contexts of policy

It is important to identify which government departments are involved, become part of their mailing lists and show interest in that agency's work. Knowing about the policy development process is a key part of becoming involved. Also it is important to know the working of government, which jurisdictions have what responsibility. There are differences in powers and work of the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments. They may engage in different processes. They may not have departmental offices in your area. These are key aspects of working with government.

It is important to remember that issues that are seen as urgent, crisis or have the attention of the politicians or public servants usually make it to the policy agenda.

All governments have a philosophy or ideology. The issues that receive attention need to fit in with that philosophy. Thus you need to become aware of what these are and present your issue in a way that is compatible with the worldview of that government. These are readily identifiable from government statements.

Some ways we can influence the policy development of government include:

- community consultation
- requests for submissions
- participation in advisory mechanisms e.g. committees
- meeting with an appropriate public servant to inform them about a particular issue
- including in project reports information about issues
- visiting your local Councillor, or member of parliament to inform them of a community issue
- taking part in government surveys
- input into impact statements
- bring media attention to your issue
- undertake research or needs analysis and present your findings
- develop solutions to the problems and argue how why they are cost effective

#### **Checklist for Policy Advocacy**

- ◆ Identify what are the organisational arrangements for discussing policy positions –e.g. inter- department committees, public consultations, and meetings with public servants. Who is included who is excluded from these?
- ◆ Identify which department is responsible for guiding, developing or implementing the policy
- ◆ Determine which other agencies have a peripheral role to play in the policy process
- ◆ Find out which organisations represent non-government interests in the policy process including community, professional and private sector bodies
- ◆ Find out if there is policy networks that you can be involved in. They are usually good source of information about the policy processes
- ◆ Identify if anyone has done research on the issue and what arguments does the research make
- ◆ Articulate the issues you want addressed including the need, ways to resolved the problem, where the issue stands in relation to government ideology, practicality of addressing the issue, and costs and benefits of addressing this issue
- ◆ Establish a communication strategy – how will you present your case so that you are not dismissed
- ◆ Establish where there is a need for legal change or legal challenge

- ◆ Identify what is your capacity to exert pressure on this issue
- ◆ Make contact with other agencies that may support you in your advocacy
- ◆ Identify if there is a need to influence the agendas of other bodies prior to policy advocacy e.g. parliamentary committees, party policy committees

# 17. Social Planning

Social planning is a public policy activity creating opportunities for the development of individuals and communities through deliberate and rational activities that can best respond to social, economic and cultural diversity within the population it serves and develop spaces that promote health and well-being, reduce inequalities and contribute to social justice. Planning is for the purpose of maximising welfare and solving social problems.

**Social Planning** is the conscious attempt to solve problems and control the course of future events by foresight, systematic thinking, investigation, and the exercise of value preferences in choosing amongst alternative courses of action. (Gilbert & Specht, 1977:1)

Social planning work tends to be found in many areas, in particular in government. Planning is for the purpose of maximising welfare and solving social problems using analytical tools to resolve problems, influence decisions through design of regulations and implementation of strategies. The planner is seen as a rational objective person. Community participation can vary in these planning processes, as they are context specific. Although there are many good practices, much of the planning processes operate from a management model, as planning presupposes that change in a complex social environment requires expert planners who, through the exercise of technical abilities, can guide social change processes.

It is possible, however, to have more open and grass roots level planning and co-ordination, often referred to as **community planning**. The role of the experts will be one of facilitating the process of understanding how existing resources can be better utilised and co-ordinated. Experts may assist with the process of prioritising and informing. Participation in the form of local participatory planning is of utmost importance. Community planning emphasises human worth, reciprocity, and empathy. There is recognition of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication and willingness to dialogue and work through issues. There is a shift away from the monopoly of knowledge by experts to an acknowledgement of the local, knowledge, and experience. Community planning stresses experiential knowledge acquired in the course of action – therefore there is a shift away from document oriented planning towards learning in action. Community planning involves recognition of disadvantage and inequality and planning is seen as a way to redistribute resources, power and ensure participation. Before embarking on a community planning exercise it is fundamental to ask:

- What are the different values that inform planning processes?
- What are the planning choices available?

- Whose interests are being served by particular planning decisions?

Community planning is an important part of community development and achieving structural change. It involves:

- ◆ Working with groups to input into broad planning processes
- ◆ Advocating on for a group to increase resources and services
- ◆ Working toward service development

#### **TYPES OF SOCIAL PLANNING**

- Community Needs Analysis
- Local Area Planning
- Regional Area Planning
- Urban or Rural Planning
- Needs Based Planning
- Infrastructure Planning
- Human Service Planning
- New Communities Planning
- Urban Design
- Community Facilities Planning
- Strategic Land Use Planning

### **17.2 TECHNIQUES OF SOCIAL PLANNING**

Social planning involves the use of a number of techniques. These techniques are designed to demonstrate the 'need' and to examine options for resolving problems. Most of often these techniques are used in combination. The techniques listed below are some of the main instruments used in social planning:

- undertaking needs assessment
- key informants survey
- use of social indicators
- data collection and analysis
- secondary data analysis
- demographic analysis
- cost-benefit techniques
- strategic planning
- program budgeting

- evaluation
- forecasting
- goal analysis
- social impact assessment
- community profiling
- forecasting and projections
- community forums, conferences, panels
- public hearings

Each of these techniques requires particular skills in researching, communication, conducting meetings and documentation. For more information on techniques refer to <http://www.communityplanning.net>

### **17.3 ENGAGING IN A PLANNING TASK**

There are a number of processes involved in social and community planning. The first task is to identify the community you are working with. You also need to clarify objectives and determine the expected outcomes. Appropriate timelines and processes need to be identified. Key skills necessary for planning include consultation, participation, cooperation, negotiation, strategy, and development. The social planning task will require you to address some of the key processes listed below:

- Defining the problem in detail
- Diagnosing the causes of the problem
- Seek relevant theories that offer different perspectives on the problem
- Obtain realistic scope or scale of the problem
- Identify what may be the key variables impacting on the problem into the future
- Map out the present and potential resources
- Determine the legal parameters of the issue
- Identify what geographic regions are affected
- Develop options for intervention and the consequences of each option
- Work out the best way to present our findings and arguments
- Identify who to present the information to
- Determine what processes are there for planning
- Work out who may support your planning options
- Advocate for change

You need to ensure that all members of the community/group are involved and participating in each step of the process. It is important to keep people informed and give feedback along each stage of outcomes. It may be strategic to connect different groups or stakeholders impacted by the same issues. Communities need to be engaged in developing strategies and action for change.



## **Social Planning Characteristics**

**Focus – finding solutions to community issues. Often focused on specific community issues.**

**Change strategy – ‘Lets get the facts and think through the next logical steps’.**

**Fact-finding and analytical skills are of central concern.**

**People’s participation through a range of mechanisms**

# *18. Social Action*

## **18.1 WHAT IS SOCIAL ACTION?**

Human beings have searched for alternative forms of society, as the ideal. Utopia – the ultimate in human hope ‘ what ought to be’ and what cannot be achieved provides hope and struggle against disadvantage. People would not have attained the possible unless time and again it reached for the impossible. Ideas and vision help humankind shape its history and create social alternatives. Therefore, social action is about achieving social change to alleviation of sources of disadvantage. Social action is often engaged in when other means of action have failed. Social action is part of the continuum of bringing about structural change. There are numerous examples of community workers engaging in social action.

Social action is taken by an organized group or movement to achieve some reform or to promote a particular cause, outside the normal or formal channels of a government or political system, and aimed at gaining support from the wider public. The focus (target) of social action can be government agencies, private companies, multinational companies, community organisations, individual communities or the general public as a whole. Examples of social action include public forums against the proposed introduction of testing to become Australian citizenship, public rallies against the detention of asylum seekers and petition against the curtailment of funding for second language funding in schools.

Successful social change is about people’s aspirations – their hopes and dreams. It is more than simply providing information to people and hoping they change. Social action is about making fundamental changes to the way society functions either generally (stopping racial harassment against minorities) or on a specific issue (getting emergency housing for women and children from diverse cultural backgrounds escaping domestic violence).

Resistance to social change is common among those in power as they seek to retain the status quo. The potential for social change is greatest when existing societal structures are inconsistent with public perceptions, values and attitudes. Some societal structures tend to cause social change more readily due to their direct impact on people (e.g. mass media) while others cause social change to be slower due to support for existing order. In general, social processes tend to support the existing societal structures.

Social action is the process of influencing change. It is often confused with advocacy where one pleads or intercedes on behalf of another. Social action is

consciously attempting to bring about change through activities that benefit larger sections of the community. It presupposes that a disadvantaged segment of the population needs to be organised, in alliances with others, to make adequate demands on the larger community for increased resources or treatment more in accordance with social justice or democracy

## **18.2 PROCESSES OF SOCIAL ACTION**

Social action is probably the most difficult of the change methodologies as it involves challenges to existing situations of power, resources, knowledge, attitudes and systems. Social action is often more obviously political and sometimes involves confrontation or resistance. It may involve the efforts of community organisations linking up with broader social movements. Social action often involves decisions about strategy for example:

- deciding which issue to pursue, listening to people's aspirations and collectively determining what people see as a vision for change, that is setting a goal
- appropriate analysis of what is causing the issue and who is the target group, that is gathering the facts
- whether the moment/context is right to push an issue
- identifying where the power lies, what level of resistance is expected and assessing your own power
- deciding what is an opportunity or a waste of time (knowing how to make the most of the opportunities that are available rather than simply pushing a single agenda)
- developing strategies, tactics and action plans to achieve the chosen objectives
- ensuring there is support for the action, there is solidarity amongst group members and those participating trust each other
- deciding if is time to take a risk and be brave!
- taking action and then evaluating the success of the action

Before embarking on social action it is vital that you have explored and understand the barriers that will prevent change as well as devising tactics for overcoming these barriers. Those engaging in social action need to ask a key set of questions:

- Are the actions realistic given the resources available (money, time, workers)?
- Are actions feasible in the amount of time available?
- What are the hindering factors?
- What are the facilitating factors?
- What are the issues at stake?
- Who is benefiting from the problem?
- Who is responsible for the problem?

- What are the practical tasks involved?
- Who are the people with significant stake in the outcome?
- Are there dilemmas or contradictions e.g. tensions between the end and the means?
- Who are the key players (groups or individuals) and allies?
- What may be attitudes of the broad public (including media) to this action?
- What are the possible results of the action? Could it have disastrous consequences?
- Is there strong group solidarity?

These questions will provide some guide to embarking on social action. Australian writers have pointed out best campaigns have been those underpinned by values which strive for social change and to improve structural disadvantage (Nash 2001, Hewett & Wiseman 2001).

### 18.3 METHODS FOR SOCIAL ACTION

There are many methods for social action. What method you utilise depends on the issue, the community, the target of action and the strategies of the action. These include:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Negotiation and Bargaining</li> <li>▪ Protests</li> <li>▪ Strikes</li> <li>▪ Rallies</li> <li>▪ Demonstrations</li> <li>▪ Petitions</li> <li>▪ Boycotts</li> <li>▪ Sit ins</li> <li>▪ Developing social movements</li> <li>▪ Public meetings</li> <li>▪ Community education campaigns</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Issue based campaigns e.g. 'fair trade'</li> <li>▪ Targeting politicians or political parties e.g. chain email letters</li> <li>▪ Phone in or hotlines</li> <li>▪ Working with the media</li> <li>▪ Litigation and test cases through legal systems</li> <li>▪ Lobbying</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

Undertaking social action requires you to be mindful of legal processes. For example, if you are planning a rally you need to be mindful of permits, the laws relating to rallies, liaising with police and ensuring that the rally proceeds in accordance with your objectives. Violence at a rally or negative media reporting may result in losing support for your issue. Social action also requires leadership. It is essential that you have people who have experience in social action and have the credibility and support to provide guidance to the social action. Things to avoid include bribery, biased reporting of the issue, threats to people, personal targeting of individuals, violence and actions that may be considered 'dirty tricks'.

If you are a community worker funded by government you will need to consider the conditions of your funding. It may be that your role as a worker does not include social action activities and engaging in social action may jeopardize the funding. It is also possible that your agency may be viewed negatively or as too 'radical' if you engage in social action. These are decisions that the Management Committee or the Board of your agency will need to consider prior to embarking upon any social action. Often decisions are made about the severity or urgency of the social problem, the responsiveness or lack of relevant agencies and the philosophies of your agency.

### **People's participation in social action involves :**

**Listening to people's aspirations** – what people want.. What are people's visions for change?

Finding out what people **understand** about their current situation and how they will achieve their vision. Do they have all necessary knowledge and information? Do you as a worker have all necessary knowledge? Are the facts available? Understanding people's beliefs about possible solutions to their problems.

Do people have the necessary **skills** to participate and achieve change? Do you have the necessary skills to act in a change-agent role? Community capacity building – building the skills of community members to be active participants and their own change agents.

Making sure participation and the process to achieving solutions is **convenient**. Are people able to participate? Why aren't they or why won't they participate?

Building people's **trust** that they can make a difference. Is there passion for change? Are credible people on side and endorsing change? Are people feeling connected and united? Is there solidarity? Participation in social action often involves much personal sacrifice and moving out of individual comfort zones – are people supported?

Are there **change moments** – moments when people experience change and the possibility of change. This is important for building self-confidence as well as confidence that change is possible. Do people have access to passionate advocates? Is the change path more visible?

Is people's participation being **reinforced**? Are people being given positive feedback? Are successes no matter how small celebrated?

Adapted from : ***On Making Social Change*** by Les Robinson (2001)  
[www.socialchange.net.au](http://www.socialchange.net.au) or [les@socialchange.net.au](mailto:les@socialchange.net.au)



# **SECTION 3**

## **PRACTICE ISSUES**

## *19. Methods of Social Change*

When working with communities there are often not simple rules that we can follow to do our work and bring about change. The process of change is influenced by so many variables including social, cultural, economic and environmental considerations. What works in one situation will probably not work again in another.

Often when doing community development and trying to bring about change it is easy to 'get stuck' or feel 'overwhelmed'. This section aims to provide a guide to various methods that can be used in practice. These methods are a guide only and will have to be adapted to the specifics and context of the issue you are working on. The guide will help you to 'get a better feel' for the issue and enable you to become more comfortable working through the process of change. It is important to note that the process of change is not sequential - each method will not necessarily follow one after the other.

The quality of people's lives can be dependent upon the competency of *our* work. Therefore it is important to develop methods that are reliable, effective and transparent. Further, these methods can help to justify our position to those whom we are trying to influence including governments and communities. Being able to articulate our methods and the reasons for our methods gives greater credibility. If we cannot explain our methods - then it might seem that we do not really know what we are doing.

## *20. Getting Involved*

*-Is this a community issue?*

*-Is there a role for me and/or my organisation to play?*

These questions are key questions that you need to be answered prior to engaging in community development activity. The first step in the process of change is understanding the situation and identifying whether this is an issue that is effecting a number of people (a community issue) - or if it is an issue for only an individual person or family (which can be addressed through direct service delivery interventions such as case work). Is the problem social rather than personal? A problem specific to an individual will require a different response than that which is affecting a number of people.

It is important to spend time briefly exploring the issue to clarify your own thoughts so that you can share them with others to get them involved in the process of change. We may use the following case study to answer the above questions.

### **CASE STUDY - ACCOMMODATION**

Over lunch you were talking with the client support worker who was letting out her frustration about trying to find suitable housing for a single mother with 6 children who have recently arrived in Brisbane and who are currently staying in very overcrowded conditions with a relative. The case worker says that she has telephoned 5 real estate agents that morning and after giving the family's details the agents quickly say that they don't have a big enough house or that the owner did not approve (without giving any details about why the owner did not approve). As the community development worker you realise that real estate agent's lack of cooperation could be a problem being experienced by many more newly arrived migrants and refugees and that there might be a role for you to play in responding to this issue.

### **⇒ Identifying the issue**

In identifying whether the problem is a community issue - it is often useful to do a **quick analysis**. There are different ways you can do a quick analysis including a **brainstorm**. A brainstorm gives your mind the opportunity to run 'freely' and to explore what you already know about an issue. Brainstorming involves writing



down all of the questions that come to your mind about the issue and what you know off the top of your head about the issue.

In doing a brainstorm it is important to include your personal beliefs and attitudes in relation to an issue. This is important because sometimes we might look at a situation and '**see what we want to see**'. Our understanding can be affected by our beliefs, our attitudes, our past experiences and our hopes. Our personal beliefs and prejudices may cause us to block out other angles to an issue.

### **EXAMPLE OF BRAINSTORMING!**

**After having another discussion with the case worker who said this was a problem for many clients**

#### **Questions that come to my mind:**

- **Is there is a problem with finding a house**
- **is this a problem only because it is a big family?**
- **is this a problem because the family has only just arrived?**
- **why are the real estate agents not being helpful - do they really not have big enough houses? Is this a problem only in this area? If we tried another area with more houses available would there be a similar problem?**
- **why are the house owners refusing to accept this family as tenants?**
- **are the real estate agents reluctant because a community organisation is involved? (Perceptions about clients of community organisations)**
- **are there prejudicial attitudes towards refugees and migrants**

#### **My understanding and beliefs :**

**Housing is in demand in this area – I had to go to 2 real estate agents to find a house for myself to rent last year – but I found the real estate agents going out of their way to get my business. Why do they not want to help this family? I have heard a number of clients and now the caseworker saying that it is really difficult for newly arrived migrants and refugees to get private rental housing through real estate agents. I think that there might be many reasons for this – not being able to give past references, not being employed etc. Suitable housing is vital for settling and establishing yourself again after migration - without it families can be under a lot of stress. My initial feeling is that this is a major problem that requires some sort of community development response however I have to find out a lot more information about the issue and get some facts.**

**Issues:**

- **access** to the private rental market (appropriate/affordable accommodation for families who are not yet established in terms of employment/networks /understanding of system/transport)
- **equity** in terms of the response of real estate agents and commitment to finding suitable accommodation (individuals/families with higher needs placed in the 'too hard basket')
- **discrimination** because people are migrants or refugees (perceptions/attitudes of owners/ agents regarding newly arrived migrants/refugees)

***THIS IS A COMMUNITY ISSUE AND NOT JUST A PERSONAL ISSUE FOR A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL OR FAMILY.***

There are many other different activities that you can use to help you to understand and decide whether it is a community issue (effecting many people). For example in this case you might scan the windows of local real estate agents / look through the newspapers / or check with other workers to find out whether they think that this is a community issue.

Once you understand the issue a bit more - it is then important to decide whether your organisation has a role to play in responding to the issue and if so whose responsibility it is to be involved in trying to bring about change.

⇒ **Does my organisation have a role to play or are there other organisations more able to respond to this issue?**

An important consideration once a community issue has been identified is whether there is a role for your organisation in responding to this issue. What are the **mission, goals and activities** of your organisation? Does responding to this issue fit with these?

Your organisation may only be funded for direct service delivery to clients (such as case management, or counselling). As such it may not have the resources to engage in community development activities focusing on change around a particular issue. There may be another organisation which is funded to represent clients around this particular issue and which has greater understanding, resources, skills and recognition to work towards change on this issue.

Another issue, which you need to consider is whether your organisation will be able to engage in some change activities and ask the question 'does this place

our funding at risk?’ For example, if your organisation lobbies around a particular issue this may jeopardise financial support to other programs. It may be more strategic for your organisation to support another organisation on a particular issue for example through the provision of relevant information (e.g. maintaining a register of how many clients have experienced difficulties in finding accommodation and what the particular difficulties were – keeping detailed case records which could be shared maintaining the confidentiality of individual clients).

There will be particular factors within your organisation that you will have to consider. For example as a case worker it may be beyond your job duties to respond to a community issue - it may be the responsibility of someone else. Or the management committee may have recently decided that it is necessary to consolidate existing programs and delay beginning new programs. Thus, you might have to decide how to articulate the need for your organisation to respond to this issue keeping in mind the particular factors of your organisation.

In deciding whether your organisation has a role to play in responding to an issue - it is useful to refer to your supervisor or others within the organisation to get their opinion. You might think that your organisation might not be interested in responding to this issue now because of high workloads and other priorities but others might think that the urgency of the issue requires a response. For example in the above case you might find after briefly exploring the issue that 4 out of 5 real estate agencies in a suburb have an ‘informal’ policy of not providing accommodation to newly arrived migrants and refugees until they have been here for at least one year or got secure employment. Your supervisor may think that this situation is urgent enough to require a response despite other organisational barriers e.g. lack of resources.

Thus, in initially deciding whether your organisation has a role to play in responding to an issue - it is important to take into account the particular context and factors (both internal and external) which may impact on your organisation becoming involved on this issue.

**EXAMPLE - Internal factors.**

- A goal of our organisation is to respond to community issues affecting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Problems accessing suitable accommodation is a crucial community issue for newly arrived migrants and refugees - lack of accommodation will impact on the effectiveness of our intervention strategies overall. As the community development worker my job is to identify and develop responses to community issues such as this.
- I am already very busy working on other projects and issues. This is a very big issue and would take up a significant amount of my time. I believe that it

is a priority - I will need to check with my supervisor about whether I should work on this issue and whether it should be prioritised over other issues.

**EXAMPLE - External factors.**

- There is another organisation whose job it is to lobby around the issue of accommodation - however I know that in the past they have not responded effectively to the issue of accommodation needs for newly arrived migrants and refugees.
- Other possible options. Is it more efficient/effective to concentrate on tackling the issue ourselves or trying to engage the other organisation and build their commitment to responding to the particular accommodation issues of newly arrived migrants and refugees.

Thus, in preliminary considerations about an issue it is important to explore:

- whether an issue is a community issue,
- your own initial understanding and beliefs concerning the issue, and
- the possible factors which may impact on your organisations role in responding to the issue.

This stage should not take long - the aim is to **quickly analyse** the issue, the context and your own thoughts in order to make an informed decision about whether to pursue the issue further. Your preliminary considerations will enable you to be organised to move onto the next stage in the process of change. These considerations will help to clarify your thoughts and enhance your ability to inform others about the issue.

## 21. Mapping Issues

An important step in the change process involves **issue analysis** in order to provide a firm basis for future action. It is important to identify the type of issue, who is affected by it and its location geographically or socially in the system.

As a community worker, you bring a particular understanding - the focus at this stage is to expand your understanding and to explore the perceptions of others (those directly affected, government, researchers etc) in order to build knowledge around an issue as well as make a strong case that is based on evidence.

Thus, the aim of this phase is to develop greater understanding and knowledge of the issue from the point of view of key participants (stakeholders) including the community and government. This phase involves describing the issue and examining possible solutions to the issue.

### **What's the difference between a problem and an issue?**

**Problems are different from issues. Problems are the things that an outside observer looking at a community would say are wrong with it. But not everybody in the community would agree. People need to feel strongly about a problem for it to be an issue. It must be something that enough people feel strongly about to be willing to work to change. So issues are problems that people feel strongly about and want to do something about. But in order to be a good issue, a problem must have a solution that can be achieved by people working together. The sad fact is that there are all kinds of problems that are serious, that affect people's lives and that people feel strongly about that they really can't do much to change right at this time.**

**[From: S. Kahn (1995) *Organising- A Guide for Grassroots Leaders* pp 79-80.]**

*What is the issue? What are we really talking about? What are we trying to do?* How many times have you sat in a meeting and suddenly someone asks these questions. Everyone does not understand an issue in the same way - there are many ways of interpreting the same issue.

For example in the above accommodation case some people might view the issue as a shortage of suitable accommodation in an area whereas you might view the issue as a problem with real estate agents' attitudes. Different groups can define problems and issues differently.

It is important to properly observe and describe an issue in order to ensure that your interpretation 'has weight' and is influential – rather than simply relying on your 'gut feeling' or 'common talk' about an issue. Many community myths are based on common beliefs that are untrue (e.g. 'all refugees are illegal immigrants and queue jumpers').

## => Describing the Issue ~ 'Issue Mapping'

In describing an issue it is important to focus on both the specific information about an issue as well as broader trends in society and how these are impacting on the issue.

1. **What is the issue? Is the issue specific and does it address a specific need?** For example the need to improve accommodation services for migrants is a real issue, however it is too broad. A more specific issue might be the need to improve access to private rental accommodation for migrants and refugees who have been in Australia for less than a year and who wish to live in inner southside suburbs.
2. **What do people say is the issue? What do people say are their needs?** For example do people say the issue is shortage of appropriate accommodation or do people say that it is real estate agents' attitudes? Do people say their need is for accommodation in a particular suburb or their need is for affordable accommodation anywhere.
3. **Where is it located (geographically or socially).** For example is this problem an issue in only a particular geographical area or an issue for a particular social group e.g. migrants, older people, people with a disability etc.
4. **Who is affected? The degree to which different groups are affected?** For example *how many* people does the issue affect? Does the issue affect one group more? Who **exactly** is affected (all migrants or only newly arrived migrants or only migrants from a particular cultural background or only women refugees)?
5. **How does the issue affect people?** (Including socially, culturally, economically, emotionally, psychologically, medically, and physically). What are the impacts and consequences of the issue? For example repeated rejections for accommodation can affect people in a number of ways including psychologically (anxiety), emotionally (despair),

economically (having to rent anything even if it is more costly in order to get accommodation), socially (being forced to live in an area away from social networks/public transport etc).

6. **What are the causes and history of the issue?** When did this become an issue/origins of the issue? What is the background to the issue? What are the causes (real and presumed) of the issue? Are there broader trends that are impacting on this issue (e.g. loss of affordable housing in the inner city due to rising rental costs)? Are there any 'theories' in relation to this issue?
7. **Are there any prevalent attitudes or beliefs surrounding this issue?** For example do people think that 'new migrants are getting heaps of money from the government' or 'refugees are queue jumpers and trying to rip off the system' or 'new migrants don't understand how we do things here' or 'people from that country wreck houses' or there needs to be a particular number of people in a 3 bedroom house.
8. **Who else has done work on this issue?** Do others view this as an issue and have they done any work to try and respond to the issue? Are there any records being kept by other organisations? Have there been any recent research projects or have academics written about this specific issue? Has another community organisation responded to this issue within their community?
9. **What are the differing perceptions/points of view about the issue? How do different groups define the issue?** It is important to explore the different points of view of key stakeholders. What do those affected say about the issue? What do government departments say? What do politicians say? What do other community organisations say? What does the broader community say? What do academics say? What does the media say? The varying ways in which the issue is perceived is of great importance and will determine the strategies you adopt. Different stakeholders may view the problem differently and thus believe in different solutions. For example one group may view the issue as 'social injustice' with some people deprived of certain resources and another group may view the issue as a 'social problem' within the broader social/economic context.
10. **What are the barriers for addressing the issue?** (e.g. public opinion).
11. **Who has the power to address these issues?** (e.g. is a particular government department interested in this issue or another organisation?)
12. **What are the resources available for addressing this issue?** (e.g. is there some funding available to research the issue?)

13. **What are the chances for success in settling this issue?** (e.g. will it be impossible to solve this issue – is it more strategic to focus on another issue)

### **Methods for ISSUE MAPPING**

- **Compiling documentation** about an issue: reports, newspaper clippings, newsletters, minutes of meetings, information from internet sites, case notes (ensuring confidentiality).
- **Keeping records/case studies** e.g. keeping your own record of how many rejections for accommodation by real estate agents in an area and case studies of individual clients experiences in finding suitable accommodation.
- **Participant-observation** - for example going with a client when they go to a real estate agent and being an observer - not directly participating in the interaction. Observing the interaction from the point of view of 'an outsider'.
- **Looking at statistics** such as Australian Bureau of Statistics records. Seeing if you can access the records of other agencies e.g. Housing Queensland etc.
- **Literature review** or search of academic databases to see what has been written on the issue.
- **Community consultation** - focus groups, interviews with individuals, surveys, etc.
- **Conducting a formal needs analysis** - e.g. applying for project funding to do a needs analysis or action research.



## *22. Needs Analysis*

“In their everyday work community development workers are cautioned against too much action without analysis which becomes mindless action and too much analysis without action which is paralysing.” {Kenny (1999).}

Structural change programs are often based on thinking through key issues and designing appropriate strategies. Community needs studies have increasingly become important tool in bringing about change. Many governments have now moved to a needs based planning which uses needs indicators to determine program delivery and resource allocation. Thus, community development workers, increasingly, have to demonstrate the needs of their community for funding submissions, policy development and service delivery.

### **22.1 CONCEPT OF NEED**

The concept of need is very complex and needs assessment assumes that all needs are objective, rational and can be measured. Reality is far from this. Needs are usually socially and culturally defined. These change in time even within the same society. Needs are also relative (including what is considered basic needs). What is considered an essential need in one society is not in another. For example a telephone is seen as an essential need in Australia and yet in many parts of the world it is considered a luxury. Also, needs involve value judgements about what is important to the lives of individuals and communities and what is not. Needs are not static, they are fluid and constantly changing. It is important to differentiate between true and false needs. True needs are what people actually feel they need to reach their human potential. False needs are those that we are persuaded we need through advertising, media, peers and education.

### **22.2 TYPES OF NEED**

There are four types of need that has been developed by Bradshaw (1972) which are now widely used:

- **normative need** refers to those needs that are defined by ‘experts’. Your role as worker often means that you are interpreting and defining the needs of others.
- **felt need** refers that need which is identified and stated by community members/clients themselves.
- **expressed need** refers to that need where steps have already been taken to address the issue e.g. assessed through waiting lists, writing of letters, petitions.
- **comparative need** refers to a comparison of resources or lack of them between communities, e.g. hospital beds per capita across regions.

Often the ‘need’ to do something is obvious. However just because you believe there is a need does not mean that government departments, funding bodies or members of the community will agree with you. They may need proof that the need really exists.

Needs are expressed in different ways. People talking about their needs are important but it does not prove their need. People’s actions often point to their needs (for example if people start moving far away to find affordable accommodation – this indicates their need). Comparing between different situations also points to need (for example if newly arrived migrants from one particular cultural group are finding it more difficult to find accommodation).

Presenting proof across the different types of need reinforces your argument that a need exists. Your argument is stronger than if you were relying only on one type of need e.g. ‘people are saying that this is their need’.

### 22.3 GATHERING AND UTILISING EVIDENCE OF NEED

It is important to gather evidence of need. Keep lots of notes of people’s comment, minutes of meetings, discussions with other workers and research links. Ask people what they need. Talk to people at community events, meetings, informal gatherings, and community centres. See if people’s actions reflect their need. Observe what people are doing. Ask them why they are doing something (e.g. moving far away). Compare different situations. Compare with other groups, organisations, regions, past reports, research and statistics (if available).

The following table provides method of collecting evidence of need. These are some possibilities and are not exhaustive.

NEED	METHOD OF COLLECTING EVIDENCE
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<b><i>Normative Need</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature search</li> <li>• Expert Reports</li> <li>• Research Findings</li> <li>• Government Reports</li> <li>• Discussions with Experts</li> </ul>
<b><i>Felt Need</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking questions in interviews, focus groups, surveys</li> <li>• Casual talks at lunches, group meetings</li> <li>• Visits to homes, community centers</li> <li>• Oral history – stories, videos, poetry</li> <li>• Obtaining letters of support</li> <li>• Conducting case studies</li> <li>• Testimonials</li> </ul>
<b><i>Expressed Need</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of numbers enrolled in classes, activities, or services</li> <li>• Enquiries for activities or services</li> <li>• Waiting lists</li> <li>• Experience of past programs</li> <li>• Information stalls (e.g. at shopping centers)</li> <li>• Petitions</li> <li>• Numbers of people not turning up</li> <li>• Gaps in service areas</li> </ul>
<b><i>Comparative Need</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison with other groups or communities</li> <li>• Geographic comparisons</li> <li>• Comparisons with other programs</li> <li>• Comparisons with past programs</li> <li>• ABS, Census and other data</li> <li>• Longitudinal studies</li> <li>• Other social indicators</li> <li>• Other Needs studies</li> <li>• Government policies, reports or documents</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Methods of Collecting Needs Evidence**

### **1. Sources of Information**

It is important to use different sources of information in your research. This makes your argument more solid and convincing. For example if you have only talked with one group of people you may only have one side of the story.

Your sources of information may include: Individuals, families, community groups, community organisations, community leaders, government departments, and academics. Check the internet as well as university and local libraries to see if something has already be written about the need.

You may also use **social indicators**. Social indicators are an indirect way of trying to understand what is going on in any situation. For example mortality rates (the number of babies who die compared to those babies born) can be used as an indicator of community health.

#### EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL INDICATORS

- **Health:** rates of expenditure on health services, hospital capacities, admission and discharge rates, use of health services, life expectancy, morbidity, and mortality rates.
- **Housing:** amount of space per occupant, rates of amenities, life of housing stock, availability of different types of housing and changes in affordability rates.
- **Disadvantage:** income levels, level of social organisations, family stability and dysfunction, educational levels, unemployment levels, mental and physical health, access to housing and economic self-sufficiency.

Although social indicators are useful, it is important to be cautious in their use for a number of reasons. Firstly, there may be a lack of 'fit' between indicator and indicated. For example a low usage of doctors not necessarily mean good health. Social indicators are highly technical and are determined by experts. There may be differences of opinion amongst experts. Finally, although social indicators appear neutral they have a value base and are often worked out certain assumptions. It is important to question whose values prevail in the indicators.

## 2. Putting Together Your Information.

List all of your information point by point. Identify common points/comments. Put that information together under headings e.g. refugee views, migrant views, real estate agent views, community organisation views, research findings, government department views. You can use qualitative or quantitative indicators of need in writing up your report.

Look at ways that the information you have gathered can mislead you. For example real estate agents say that there is a big shortage of housing in the area but advertisements for rental accommodation seem constant and regular.

Your needs assessment research may tell you something very different from what you expected – be prepared for this. For example there are different views about what is appropriate housing – real estate agents think that large families require 6 bedroom homes whereas the families themselves are happy with more available 3 bedroom homes. You have to respond to what your analysis tells you.

Ife points out that needs can be seen and documented from different perspectives. He offers a model of needs statements as illustrated in the table below:

<b>Need Statement</b>	<b>Values/Interests of Need Definer</b>	<b>Expertise of Need-Definer</b>	<b>Information Base</b>
Population defined (general population)	Perceived interest of community	Limited knowledge available through media etc and personal contacts	Perception of community, experience of friends, social network
Consumer defined (client or community)	Self-interest in need definition	Personal experience of problem and its impact	Own experience, knowledge of others in similar circumstances
Caretaker defined (community worker, social workers)	Interests as service provider, commitment the whole community, self interest (job security)	Expertise according to training and previous experience	Personal knowledge of community and also ability to take broader perspective
Inferred (researchers, planners)	Varies according to politics	Expertise specifically in data analysis and interpretation	Broad database but unlikely to have personal knowledge of community

**Table 2: A Model of Need Statements**

**Source: J. Ife (2002), p. 64.**

The above model enables the possibility of deriving a needs statement from the point of view of four categories of need definers. Most of the community development projects write from perspectives of caretaker or consumer. Once you determine your position, write up your findings.

You will need to determine the best way to present your report. This will vary depending on whom you are presenting the information to. If you are presenting to government a more formal and technical reporting is appropriate whereas if you are presenting it to the community you can use more informal formats. It will be useful to make recommendations on the needs identified, keeping in mind your audience. Recommendations need to be realistic and practical. Also ensure that you give appropriate feedback to people who have taken part in the needs analysis.

### **3. Using Your Evidence**

The information you have gathered will help you make your argument. It can also be valuable in raising understanding and awareness relating to the specific need. Your needs analysis can be used to plan strategies for addressing the need – e.g. community development projects, influencing policy makers, developing social action around the issue.

### **4. Common Problems Encountered When Doing Needs Analysis.**

- Making the problem too big. Start small.
- Misreading statistics. Quote the source of statistics if you use them.
- Designing community surveys can be very difficult. Ask exactly what you want to know, in simple questions and keep them short.
- Often you might be directed to the wrong source of information, or get the run around from people – keep trying!

## 23. Working with Government

Much of social arrangements are linked up with the work of governments. Governments make impact on the lives of its citizens from their birth to their death and provide regulatory processes for many life events. This is often referred to as '*from the cradle to the grave*'. Governments control resources, determine policies and make laws. Community workers engage with government in many elements of their work.

It is important to remember that there are three tiers of government in Australia: local government, State governments and the Federal Government (also referred to as the Commonwealth Government). Each of these levels of government have different functions and authority. They have responsibility for different areas of life and some areas of responsibility overlap. The first step in working with government is to understand the jurisdictional responsibility, i.e. which level of government is responsible for the issue at hand.

An important second step is to understand that when we make reference to the to ***the state***, we are not just talking about the government in power. It is used to refer to a large and complex pattern of people, organisations, rules, documents, policies, processes, procedures, laws and activities. Therefore when working with government is useful to know the different parts of the state such as the bureaucracy, the political process, statutory bodies and law enforcement agencies. Each of these elements has different functions, responsibilities and levels of authority.

There are many areas in which you can influence the government. Some of these include: budget processes, interdepartmental committees, government taskforces, policy development cycle, special interest portfolios, parliamentary committees, public inquiries, internal review and appeal processes, statutory bodies of complaint (e.g. ombudsman, health rights commission, anti-discrimination commission), political party policy making, senate inquiries, caucus and party room decisions (e.g. via back benchers).

## **23.1 INFLUENCING POLICY MAKERS AND PLANNERS**

- the lives of people from diverse cultural backgrounds are often profoundly affected by policies and plans that are formulated by government departments. Therefore it is important to participate in consultation processes, meeting and other policy-making processes.
- Get to know relevant people including politicians, and policy officers in government departments. Inform them of your point of view but understand that there might be other points of view as well.
- When meeting with policy makers don't try and present too much information at once – plan what you want to say and go with a few points only. Focus on your strongest point and make sure you have convincing material to back you up.
- Make sure that you are able to prioritise your demands. And as mentioned in the goal section – make sure your goals are realistic and achievable.
- Decide what things are negotiable and what things are not negotiable.
- It is also important to increase your support base – it is easy to 'talk to the converted' but maybe they are not in positions of influence. It is also important to talk with people who might be unconvinced or uncommitted to try and increase your support base.
- Do your homework and anticipate what the countering arguments might be.

## **23.2 LOBBYING**

Lobbying is the process of exerting pressure on key people or institutions to bring about change or attempt to influence the way things happen. Lobbying can take place for a short term or longer term on larger issues. Lobbying has a number of stages: Asking key questions about what needs to be changed and who has the authority to change it. It is useful to know what where people get their information. You are likely to know more about the issue than the people you are trying to influence. Think about how you may educate them while you are trying to change things. This requires a refined message that is simple and capable of being understood by the politicians, the media and others. You may need to demonstrate who your allies are that support your particular point of view. These can be church groups, other government agencies, other politicians, unions, community groups, peak organisations, high profile leaders and media.



Lobbying involves exerting some pressure. You need to determine what pressure you can bring to bear. Some strategies include meeting the person in authority, focusing on the impacts in the community, outlining community support, revealing media strategy and using credible avenues for exposing the issue or the stance of the agency/person.

Lobbying can be done in many ways including letters, submissions, petitions, phone calls, emails, briefings, meetings, street theatre, leaflets, faxes, public meetings, media releases, letters to the editor, and demonstrations. It is important to choose which method you will use to lobby to get the best outcome.

### **The Techniques of Lobbying Include:**

- Know what you are talking about – the facts, the issues and changes you want. Do not make mistakes about your arguments as this will reduce your credibility. Be prepared to back up your arguments with evidence. Use of personal stories help immensely to demonstrate your point.
- Meet regularly with your local Councillor (Local), Member of the Parliament (MP-State) and Member of Parliament (MP – Federal). Work with them to build their understanding of the issues facing people from diverse cultural backgrounds in the area they represent.
- Do the same with government departments and bureaucrats. Get to know them and make sure that they know who you are and what you are trying to achieve. (If you are working with an organisation it might be protocol for the Coordinator/Director to work with government departments and politicians at this level).
- Try to find an angle that will grab their attention. Don't assume that they are your 'enemy' – appeal to their community mindedness.
- Show respect and talk to them in ways in which you are able to educate them on your cause rather than allowing them to dismiss you as 'opposition'. Do not appear to be arrogant or emotional. Use sarcasm and humour carefully as this can backfire on you.
- If you are meeting with key people plan ahead and be prepared.
- Find out what stages the issue is at such as critical dates e.g. consideration by Cabinet, as it is hard to change things once a decision is made.
- If you are not achieving outcomes and want to go public determine when and why you are going to the public. Determine strategies that will work e.g. public meeting or going to the media. Identify what are the consequences of going public, e.g. will your service get de-funded. Determine how you will achieve public support for the issue e.g. by appealing to voters in a particular area.
- Never overlook informal avenues of influence such as working with ministerial advisors.
- Make use of celebrities where you can convince them to be involved.

- Lobbying is hard work and involves persistence. Do not let the knock backs and refusals deter you. Remember things move in cycles and it is possible to have issues addressed through time.

### 23.3 FUNDING

A key component of any human service work is applying for funding. Although the sources of funding vary, in Australia, bulk of the funding is applied and received through the different levels of government. It is also possible to raise funds through internal fund raising activities, philanthropic trusts and the private sector. In government there is an increasing emphasis on funding efficiency, targeting of issues or groups, proof of relevance, evidence of need, effectiveness of outcomes and accountability. This requires sophisticated methods of funding submission writing.

Government funding tends to come in three ways:

- Through funding programs which are publicly advertised
- Through tendering or contracting out
- Through special commissioned work, usually through an expression of interest

#### **Sources of Funding**

- Federal Government: various departments
- State Government: various departments
- Local Government: various Councils
- Philanthropic Trusts: foundations, trusts, memorial funds
- Research Funds: e.g. National Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council
- International Funds: UN funding, Aid agencies, international trusts and foundations, Other Government funding
- Other: charities, gaming fund revenues

#### **Processes of Funding**

Identify the sources of funding and what funding rounds they have. Obtain documentation on the funding either from the web page of the agency or through funding packages sent out. Identify the priorities for funding and how this fits within the broader policy context for that department. It is useful to speak to the contact officer about your funding proposal prior to submitting it. There are usually eligibility criteria for who can receive funding. Ensure that you are within the guidelines. If you are not eligible you may be able to work with an eligible organisation that can auspice your application.

You will need to fill out all the relevant parts of the application form. Sometimes there is no application form but a selection criterion for what needs to be addressed. This will be discussed in the next section. You will need to show that you are a credible organisation with infrastructure and capacity to carry out the project and manage the funding. There are always closing dates for the submission, ensure that you meet these timeframes. Send your application with all the necessary documents and attachments. The application needs to be signed, usually by the Director, President or other office bearer of the organisation. You should find out the process for approval of funds. In many cases there are funding advisory committees and recommendations are made to the Minister. You may be able to lobby for funding.

### **Writing Funding Submissions**

The funding submission may be a form or a proposal that you have to write. It essentially comprises the following areas:

**=> Why are you applying for the grant:** is there a specific problem, an identified need, to find out about a problem or need, to deliver a service, to run education projects and other development activity e.g. training or skills development.

**=>Types of funding:** service oriented, needs based, targeted, research funding.

**=>Agency Details:** usually includes philosophy/mission of the agency, constitution, management structure, staff profile, financial statements, capacity of agency and contact details.

**=>Project Name: short and concise indication of the project**  
Project aims and objectives broad goals of the project and specific objectives of the project. What are you trying to achieve.

**=>The Need for the Project:** what led you to develop this proposal. You will need to provide evidence of need. Please see the section above on needs analysis.

**=>Project Description:** what are you actually going to do in this project. Outline and justify the methodology and the activities. Outline target group, geographical area to be served, what activities will be undertaken. Specify timelines and stages of the project. You may need to develop a work plan.

**=>Expected Outcomes:** You will need to demonstrate concrete outcomes bearing in mind the priorities of the grants program and the objectives of your

proposal. Some areas that you can include outcome for the community or clients, outcome for your agency, outcomes for service delivery and outcomes for policy. This will need to be very concrete and measurable. Where relevant you may want to put performance indicators along milestones to be achieved along the way.

**=>Capacity of Agency to Manage and Use the Grant:** You will need to specify the expertise and qualifications of the staff in terms of project management, experience with past projects, management structures in place in the agency (human, financial and physical resource management), supervisory structures, accountability structures and equipment or resources to support the project (e.g. information technology, building).

**=>Budget:** You will need to itemise and carefully cost each item. Wages need to be based on awards plus on-costs such as superannuation, leave and work cover. You will need allow for overheads and administration. Some of the items of budget include staff salaries and fees, travel, insurance, administration, printing, publicity and promotion, interpreting and translating, hire of venues or rental and equipment hire or purchase (bearing in mind some funding rules do not allow for equipment purchase). Most funding applications specify what is not allowed e.g. capital works. It is useful to include any in-kind contribution that your agency will make. This should also be itemised and costed. Any other funds received for the project should be outlined. Some applications ask for a justification of the budget which means you will need to argue why each item is needed to carry out the project. In some instances you may need to obtain quotes e.g. for equipment hire or purchase.

**=>Evaluation:** This section should address how you will evaluate the project, what methodology will be used to identify if objectives are being achieved, what stages of the project will the evaluation take place and what performance criteria will be used to measure success.

**=>Certification:** This is usually the signature of the authorized person who undertakes to fulfill the conditions of the grant.

**=>Sending Application:** You can send in the application as per the specifications on the grants process. Sometimes it is into a tender box in a Department, sometimes it is to a particular person and other times it can be lodged electronically. Remember to send the application so that it reaches the department by the closing date. You should keep a copy for yourself!

### **After Submission of Application**

You may lobby for your grant to be approved. Some strategies include seeking the support of a 'friendly bureaucrat'; letters of support from stakeholders and

other community agencies; letter of support from your member of parliament to the relevant Minister, and direct lobbying to the Minister.

If you are successful in obtaining the grant there is usually a service agreement between your agency and the Department. This is a highly complex and legal document that should be carefully read prior to signing. You can only receive your funding after the service agreement is signed. There will usually be a reporting process to government and on the progress of the project and timelines by which to report as part of the service agreement.

The implementation of the project is as important as getting the grant. Successful project management involves planning, needs assessment, human resource management, decision making, negotiation, community engagement, communication, administration, reporting, financial management, consultation and evaluation and review.

## *24. Working With The Media*

The media often offers the most efficient way of communicating a message to the broader community. Media covers television, radio, print (e.g. newspapers and magazines), on line internet based news and information and newsletters (electronic or hard copy).

Working with the media is filled with difficulties and challenges. Although media can be effective, it can also be destructive and deliver wrong or offensive messages to culturally diverse groups. Many journalists are not aware of issues of cultural diversity and we often see problems with media reporting of diversity such as incorrect pronunciation of names, racial stereotyping and negative images of diverse communities.

It is important to remember the most media are private enterprises and their interest is selling their programs or papers. An event or an issue may be important to you or your community but this does not mean it will get media coverage. Media coverage depends on **newsworthiness** and your story must compete with other best selling stories. Newsworthiness is about new news, exciting or controversial/topical issues. How your news is treated often depends on which section of the media the story gets sent to, what other stories are happening that day, whether the issues is seen as topical. Keep a track of what type of stories different media run and target your story to their style. Often it is easier to get articles and stories in the local print press.

Techniques for working with the media include:

- regarding the media as a powerful ally
- educating the media of issues affecting people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Don't expect journalists to automatically understand. Send materials such as newsletters and case studies.
- Talk with journalists frequently – develop a relationship with some key journalists. Invite them to meet with community members.

- Show journalists why the broader public needs to hear about an issue.
- Be alert for some journalists sensationalising an issue. Make sure that they have the spirit of what you are trying to say not just the content.
- Be aware that journalists pick stories with a 'hook', something that grabs people's attention.
- Good communication is essential. Make sure that your thoughts are well articulated.
- When working with the media do not try to cram in too much information. Have a few points that you want to get across and
- Always start with your number one point. Plan beforehand what you are going to say and be strategic!!!
- Use high profile people or 'create a scene' through a strategic event to get media attention.
- Hold a press conference and invite journalists to come.
- Beware of legal issues such as defamation and contempt.

## **24.1 WRITING A MEDIA RELEASE**

A media release is a written document that can be released to the media channels. It is a statement of the news, issues and events. It needs to be current and catchy. Elements of a good media release include:

- Keeping it brief
- Having an angle on the story
- Developing a catchy title
- Write in the third person (not in I or we)
- Put the most important facts in the first paragraph such as what is happening, who is coming, where is it taking place and when.
- Write in plain English and avoid technical terms, jargon or abbreviations
- Put in quotes from key spokespeople or celebrities
- Present the media release on a letterhead, and attractive presentation
- Always include names and phone numbers of people for further information
- Ensure that the media release has a date on it

Distribution of the media release is an important task. You need to identify which media you will distribute to. You may be able to obtain a media listing from appropriate media associations. It is quicker to fax or email the media release. You should address the release to Chief of Staff of newspapers, News Editor of TV or Radio News, Editor of magazines and Producer of TV or Radio programs. You should follow up the releases with a phone call. Sometimes you will find that the media release has not reached the appropriate person. Remember that the timing of your release is important. There must be enough time for the media

cover the issues and report back to their agency. The contact person on the media release must be available at short notice to be contacted.

## **24.2 MEDIA INTERVIEWS**

Media interviews can be daunting if you are not used to them. Find out what kind of a program you are being interviewed for. Identify how long you have got. Is it pre-recorded or live to air? You may need to educate the interviewer about your topic and perhaps suggest some questions for interview. If you are being interviewed use simple English, avoid jargon and speak slowly. If you are being interviewed for radio and television be careful with your breathing as the microphone can pick up those sounds. Be prepared for your interview and keep your main message as the focus, remembering that the general public probably does not know much about the issue you are concerned with. Write down the things you want to say and keep it handy. If you are being interviewed for television, ensure appropriate clothing, light colours and comfortable fit. Find out what questions will be asked if there is time and gather your thoughts on what you will say. Do not be put off with difficult questions or interview techniques. Do not get defensive or angry but keep calm and rational. Keep appropriate body language and voice control. Look at the interviewer during the interview as if you are having a conversation with a person. Avoid using too many statistics, as the viewers/listeners cannot keep track of it.



## *25. Working Cross-Culturally*

*Globalization* is a broad term that is used to refer to the interconnectedness of the world. The term is often used to refer to processes that are primarily economic but it actually encapsulates the economic, social, cultural and political spheres of human life. One of the impacts of globalization is that societies are becoming culturally diverse and that the skills to work with people of all cultures are increasingly a mandatory competency in many aspects of work.

Different cultures have different values and assumptions. On a continuum there can be different values across cultural groups on a number of key issues:

Individualism	↔	Collectivism
Valuing competition	↔	Valuing Collaboration
“Civilized”	↔	“Primitive”
Hierarchical	↔	Egalitarian
Directness	↔	Indirectness
Confrontation	↔	Harmony
Nuclear family	↔	Extended family
Linear approaches to time	↔	Time as a continuum
Status based on material possessions	↔	Status based on community and kinship

While cultures cannot be simplified into neat models, these indicators can serve as a broad indicator of differences in values, approaches and behaviours.

In working across cultures some of the areas of difficulty for human service workers has been around the following issues:

- Gender roles
- Abortion
- Sexuality/ Homosexuality
- Religion
- Ethnicity/Race
- Political Views
- Time
- Family
- Child Rearing
- Death and Dying Practices
- Adolescence and coming of Age Practices
- Approaches to Discipline
- Capital Punishment

- Approaches to power
- Marriage (vs. non-marriage, defacto, polygamy)
- Approaches to work

In working across cultures it is important to:

- =>Have awareness of one's own cultural values and beliefs (own worldview)
- =>Have awareness of other's worldviews (especially client's).
- =>Develop skills and programs to work effectively across cultures.

## 25.1 EMPATHIC COMMUNITY WORK PRACTICE

Developing an empathic community work practice requires self-examination, development of skills and changes to the way your organisation works. Some steps that may be taken to develop a more inclusive practice are:

- B Recognise your own biases
- B Make a link between your views and the reality of lives of your communities
- B Be sensitive to what may be considered appropriate behaviour
- B Go beyond the rhetoric-commit to tackle difficult issues
- B Walk in the shoes of the other – build cultural understanding
- B Understand the processes of settlement, migration and uprooting
- B Accept that racism may be a daily reality for some
- B Avoid stereotyping
- B Develop positive minority images
- B Dispel myths about ethnic communities
- B Recognise that affirmative action is about ensuring equity
- B Work toward institutional strategies and policies that value cultural diversity
- B Recruit staff from other agencies into your agency
- B Know your clients and communities: their histories, languages, backgrounds
- B Develop research, community profiles and data bases on diverse communities to support your work
- B Use professional interpreters
- B Develop your cross-cultural communication skills, including how to use interpreters
- B Develop cultural resources and networks
- B Learn how to use cultural resources (e.g. training, interpreters, bi-lingual networks, multicultural agencies)
- B Develop leadership from culturally diverse communities
- B Develop organisational capacity of ethnic communities
- B Develop inclusion strategies for participation
- B Develop unconditional positive regards as the basis of your action

- B Engage in reflective practice and learn from your experience

## *26. Focusing to Make the Most Impact*

### **26.1 HARNESSING THE POWER OF INDIVIDUALS**

In our work with communities we often encounter people who are very passionate about an issue! Such people can be used as important allies in the process of change: they can become leaders, they can help to inform other community members, they can become role models or mentors.

An important focus of working with individuals is to develop their skills in self-advocacy – learning how to speak up for themselves and others as well as represent their own interests – these are vital skills for achieving change and becoming empowered!

When working with individuals, a focus of skills development could include focusing on:

- working together
- making choices
- knowing your rights
- respecting the rights of others
- speaking up
- being assertive
- expressing your opinions
- developing community networks
- running meetings

Techniques for working with individuals in an open and empowering way are vital worker skills that can improve your ‘technique’ in the context of community work.

### **26.2 HARNESSING THE POWER OF COMMUNITIES**

One of the advantages that we have in working in the multicultural sector is that we often work with defined communities (for example, cultural/ethnic communities or refugees). But, as we all know – just because we are working

with individual ethnic communities does not mean that everyone in the community is the same – there can be huge differences and divisions!

Nevertheless, it can be very useful and effective to harness the power of communities – no matter how challenging this can be in terms of bringing different factions together! An aim of our work should be developing the capacity of communities to speak up for themselves and to represent themselves in a way that leads to success.

**A community speaking with one voice in a way that others will listen is very powerful!**

Important techniques for skilling communities include:

- community building to bring different groups together
- assisting communities to focus on the long-term gains of working together
- facilitating and supporting when people decide to work together
- ensuring that communities are aware of rights in the Australian context
- training on advocacy techniques for leaders (e.g. how to effectively consult their own community, how to be heard, how to participate in community consultation, how to devise their own strategy)
- provide opportunities for members of a community to participate in advocacy activities e.g. in meetings
- organise members of communities to become service standard monitors
- providing feedback on the quality of services / barriers of services.

Another technique relating to harnessing the power of individual communities relates to strengthening organisational structures of these communities. In order for communities to be strong it is necessary that they are supported by strong community / organisational structures (both formal and informal).

Strong communities need strong organisations. Strong organisations need strong processes, strong support and strong structures. Strong organisations command respect and attract interest from others.

Therefore an important worker role involves strengthening community structures/organisations. This involves assisting organisations to ensure that they manage information, money, people and resources in ways that are reliable, trustworthy and accountable.

For small and newly emerging communities this is very important because they often do not have knowledge relevant to the Australian context and they probably

will not have formalised community structures in place through which they can organise themselves and represent themselves.

### **26.3 NETWORKING AND BUILDING SOLIDARITY**

An important aspect of worker technique relates to developing solidarity with other interested groups. Many other groups in Australian society are interested in the welfare of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. These include:

- similar organisations in other geographical areas,
- other community organisations,
- political parties/union,
- religious groups
- interest groups representing other people experiencing disadvantage (disability, housing, indigenous and ethnic).

Therefore an important technique to have is **networking**. Networking means building relationships with a variety of people and to be able to use these relationships to bring about change. Networks can be formal or informal. It is important to clarify expectations of networks and have set agendas for meetings. Networks can provide good support, assistance and information.

# *27. Developing Your Personal Style*

A worker's individual technique and style can impact on the effectiveness of a project.

Every worker will have their own way of working according to their own personal style. Creativity and innovation are important aspects of personal style and are vital for successful projects. However, a worker's individual technique and style can impact on the overall effectiveness of a project. Therefore it is important for workers to think about their own personal style and how it impacts on the people they are working with and the project as a whole.

## **27.1 COMMUNITY WORK ROLES**

Community workers play different roles. These include

- Administrator
- Broker
- Outreach Worker
- Advocate
- Mobilizer
- Behaviour Changer
- Teacher/Educator
- Evaluator
- Caregiver
- Community Planner
- Policy Maker
- Data Manager
- Consultant
- Researcher
- Specialist

## **27.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPETENT PRACTITIONERS**

Working with diverse community groups requires community workers to be multi-skilled, trained and have experience. Through this community workers develop a range of characteristics that make them competent as practitioners and to be able to work with many different types of people. Some of these characteristics are:

- Empathy
- Self Awareness
- Awareness of Feelings
- Dynamism
- Sensitivity
- Commitment
- Responsibility

- Integrity
- Openness
- Ability to Communicate
- Compassion
- Motivation
- Curiosity
- Patience
- Acceptance
- Desire to Help
- Realism
- Genuineness
- Appropriate Authority
- Insight
- Ability to show emotions
- Flexibility
- Unconditional positive regard

### **27.3 WORDS OF CAUTION**

Community workers work under considerable pressure in what are difficult roles. There are many pitfalls to avoid in this process. Some of these are:

- Avoid 'group think'. Group think refers to the process where people who agree with each other all continue to agree with each other to the extent that they lose sight of the fact that there might be other valid points of view. To overcome group think make sure you are continually asking questions, challenging assumptions, analysing your own position and values and focusing on the objectives and results.
- Avoid 'sour grapes' – which means sulking when you do not get your own way. This makes you difficult to work with and can cause lots of personal stress.
- Beware of self-poisoning – often in human service work there are many setbacks. If people take this personally this can lead to poisoning – where personal pain and bitterness dominates. Therefore it is important to develop a style in which you focus on hope, goodwill and the positives! Commit to creativity. Accept that disappointments are a normal part of this work and not take them personally. Do not let others undermine and destabilise you. You have a right for your viewpoint to be heard too!
- Resist intimidation – often our work as advocates involves conflict with powerful people. Advocacy requires heaps of courage and personal belief and integrity. But do not be afraid to ask for help!
- Resist cooption- in achieving social change it is easy to be tempted by offers that may compromise the position of your group. There may be personal rewards offered to you (e.g. jobs, grants, resources) in return for not pursuing a particular position. It is important to identify when this is

happening and resist it. If there is a genuine compromise to be made then that needs to be determined by the community group, not the worker.

- Stay tuned – information is power! Continue to focus on your relationships with the community as well as building your understanding of an issue. Having the right information is not enough – it does not guarantee your wisdom!!! It is important that you stay tuned and consistently looking for new information.
- Beware of Burning Out – working in human services can expose you to the very best and the very worst of humanity. Becoming weighed down by workloads, the desperateness of other's situation etc. is easy. It is vital that you develop as part of your style, techniques (both personal and professional), which sustain you and your spirit. There are many different things you can do (yoga, meditation, prayer etc) including spending time with people who uplift you and making sure you keep a professional distance to protect your own emotional health.

## 27.4 MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Community workers can make a major impact on the lives of people and communities. They can be an agent for change and social improvement. It is important to hold on to the vision for a better society. Community workers can make a difference by:

- **Being an ally.** Working with people. Getting alongside them. Developing their power.
- **Being a defender.** Strengthening people's skills to assert themselves. Protecting people. Advocacy.
- **Being a champion.** Challenging and urging, teaching and guiding, exposing and fighting.

(Adapted from K. Stone, 1999).



## 28. Resources and References

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### **Useful Websites**

Citizenscape: <http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au>

Community Builders: <http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au>

Community Development Foundation: <http://www.cdf.org.uk/>

Community Development Journal: <http://www.oup.co.uk/cdj/>

Community Sector Online: <http://www.coss.net.au>

Demos: <http://www.demos.co.uk>

InfoXchange: <http://infoxchange.net.au>

Institute for Global Communications: <http://www.igc.org>

Journal of Racial and Ethnic Studies: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/>

New Community Quarterly: <http://www.borderlands.org.au>

Non Profit Good Practice Guide Website: <http://www.nonprofitbasics.org/>

On Making Social Change: <http://www.socialchange.net.au>

Social Exclusion Unit: [www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk](http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk)

The Community Planning Website: <http://www.communityplanning.net>

